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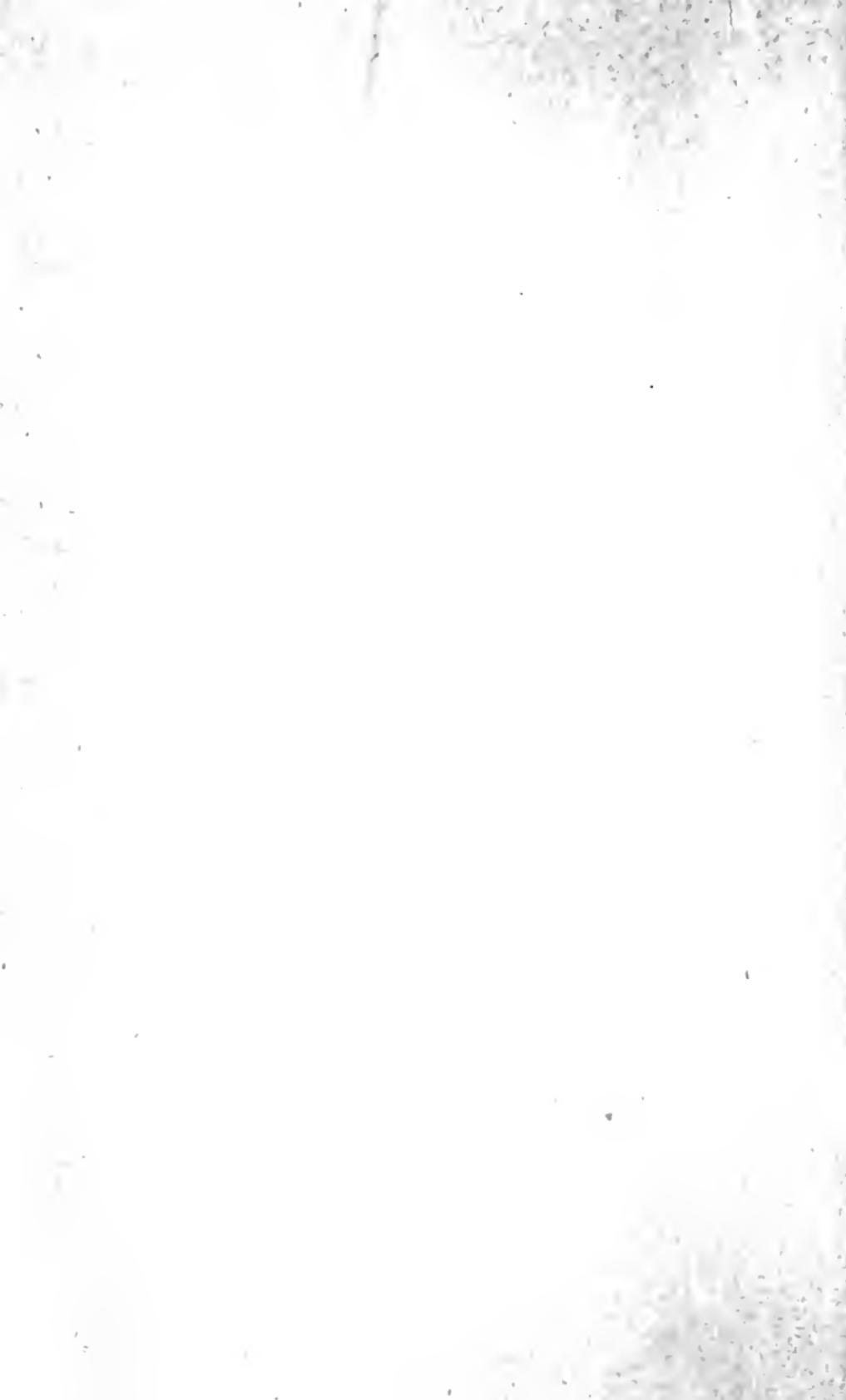
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THE INCARNATE SON OF GOD:

OR,

THE HISTORY OF THE LIFE AND MINISTRY
OF THE REDEEMER.



THE INCARNATE SON OF GOD:

OR,

THE HISTORY OF THE LIFE AND MINISTRY OF
THE REDEEMER,

ARRANGED, GENERALLY, ACCORDING TO

GRESWELL'S HARMONY OF THE GOSPELS;

WITH A

CONCISE VIEW OF THE MEDIATORIAL ECONOMY.

BY THE REV. HENRY W. WILLIAMS. *N*

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P R E F A C E.

In the progress of the Christian life, the mind turns with increasing interest to the LORD JESUS CHRIST, to mark the circumstances of His earthly course,—to trace the developments of His character,—to ponder the sayings which fell from His lips,—and to gaze with reverence and faith on the momentous facts of His death and resurrection. The evangelical history has an unfading freshness, and affords permanent instruction. And there are few who have read with devout earnestness the Scriptural narratives of the Redeemer's life and death, who have not felt a wish so to combine the incidents which they embrace, as to form a connected view of the history of Him who is their Life and their All.

The studies of many years have produced a deep conviction in the mind of the writer, that the mysterious dignity of the Redeemer's person, as the Incarnate Son of God, appears in all His teaching, and in all His actions. The proof of this great doctrine does not

rest on a few isolated passages of the Holy Scriptures: it is furnished in every page of the evangelical narratives. This is *the grand truth*, which the following work will be found to establish;—a work which briefly traces the series of preparatory arrangements for the manifestation of the Son of God on earth,—presents, in a continuous narrative, the facts of His life and ministry, His death and resurrection,—and affords a concise view of the mediatorial economy in its principles and its results.

It is the hope of the writer, that he has been enabled to cast light on many passages of the New Testament. His endeavour has been, so to follow the sacred historians in their exhibition of Christ, as to *realise* His teaching and miracles, His sufferings and death. He has sought also to interweave with the narrative brief expositions of some of our Lord's sayings, and to point out the relation of some important incidents to that great mediatorial scheme which He came to accomplish. It would be presumptuous to assume that these pages will supply the place of a commentary on the Gospels; but it is not too much to hope that they will be found to *elucidate* the evangelical history, and to bring out, in many cases, the deep meaning of the Redeemer's words.

To those who are engaged in the religious instruction of the young, the author would especially commend his theme. While he trusts that this work may be interesting

to Christian readers generally, he cherishes the hope that many who have the care of Bible-Classes, or who are engaged as Teachers in Sabbath-Schools, will derive from it considerable aid in the discharge of their important duties. It is a pleasing fact, that in the present system of religious education so great prominence is given to the History of the Redeemer, and that an effort is made to fix on the minds of the young a vivid impression of the Lord Jesus, as He taught, and suffered, and died, and rose again.

In arranging the incidents supplied by the sacred historians, the author has derived great advantage from the Rev. Edward Greswell's "Dissertations upon the Principles and Arrangement of an Harmony of the Gospels." These dissertations have been studied; and the evidence adduced by Mr. Greswell, to support his scheme of a Harmony of the Evangelists, has been carefully considered. In a few instances,—though very few,—the author has been compelled to dissent from Mr. Greswell's conclusions, and to modify the arrangement which he has suggested; but the general course of the narrative is in accordance with the plan which he has marked out.

H. W. W.

London, January 20th, 1853.



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INTRODUCTION.

THE appearance of the LORD JESUS CHRIST among men, and the facts of His death and resurrection, are the most momentous events in this world's history. All things conspire to fix our attention upon Him. The moral excellence which adorned His character, and beamed forth in all His actions,—the authority which marked His teaching,—the tenderness and condescension which distinguished His invitations to the sorrowful and anxious spirit,—may well attract and impress our minds; but a yet deeper interest must be called forth when we contemplate Him as the incarnate Son of God, and behold Him yielding up Himself to an intense and almost overwhelming anguish, and then to a violent and ignominious death, that He might redeem and save us.

Christianity is not a system of abstract truths, and of precepts founded on those truths. It is a religion of *fact*, and of *living, spiritual power*. It announces the appearance of a Divine Person in our world, clothed in the lowly form of humanity; it leads us through the scenes of His humiliation, to view Him at length extended upon the cross, as the Sacrifice for human guilt; and then it declares to us the triumph of His resur-

rection from the dead, and the universal sovereignty and everlasting priesthood with which He is now invested. It calls upon us to behold, in these events, the working out of *a scheme* which Divine wisdom, and holiness, and love, had arranged in the counsels of eternity, for the recovery and salvation of man.* It teaches us to regard them as full of interest to other orders of rational beings, and as conveying the most important lessons to the universe of God.†

Around the person of the CRUCIFIED ONE, now exalted to ineffable dignity, all the truths and precepts of our religion stand in beautiful order and harmony. The *peculiar doctrines* of Christianity are interwoven with the facts of the Redeemer's history, and lead the mind to Him, to place its trust on the virtue of His death, and to bow with reverence and love to the sway of His gracious sceptre. Light is reflected from the cross, upon the attributes of the Divine character, the intricacies of God's providential government of our world, and the great principles of His moral administration.—The *promises* which solace the spirit of man, and encourage him to approach the throne of God, for light, and purity, and strength, are all given through Christ.‡ So, too, the *moral system* of Christianity can only be apprehended aright, when it is viewed in its connexion with the person of the Lord Jesus,—the facts of His mediatorial undertaking,—and the arrangements of that economy

* 1 Peter i. 19—21; Ephesians iii. 9—11.

† 1 Peter i. 12; Ephesians iii. 10. ‡ 2 Corinthians i. 20.

of grace which has been established through His blood. He is the *Pattern* of holiness to all His people.* In Him, while on earth, we behold the unsullied purity and the ever-active goodness of the Divine nature, blended with the sympathies of manhood, and unfolding themselves in relations of human life. As we mark His footsteps, and meditate on the developments of His character, we see the loveliness of moral rectitude, and our hearts are attracted by the softened lustre of Divine perfections. The deep vicarious sorrows of the Redeemer, and the painful and ignominious death to which for our sakes He submitted, supply *new motives* to humility, devotion, benevolence, and universal purity.† New *duties* are enjoined upon us, on the ground of the mediatorial economy. Faith in the atonement, and the dedication of ourselves to the Saviour, are now *essential to a religious character*.‡ Nor is even this all. The entire moral system of Christianity *proceeds upon the principle*, that through the redeeming work of the Lord Jesus provision has been made for the communication of *a new spiritual life* to the soul of man. It announces and makes prominent the truth, that there is an unseen but mighty energy, which is put forth upon the believing mind, to renew its affections, and consecrate it to God. While it proclaims the utter impotence of human resolves, if the soul flies not to the cross for pardon and

* 1 John ii. 6 ; 1 Peter ii. 21, 22.

† 2 Corinthians viii. 9 ; Philippians ii. 5—8 ; Ephesians v. 1, 2.

‡ John iii. 18 ; Romans xiv. 7—9 ; 2 Corinthians v. 14, 15.

salvation; while it sets forth the inadequacy of even vivid and powerful convictions of the beauty of holiness, to raise man to the purity which he admires; it discloses to us a new source of spiritual power,—it tells us of “the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus,” which can make us “free from the law of sin and death,”* break the fetters of our natural corruption, and lead us forth to a region of holy liberty and peace, where, enjoying the light of the Divine countenance, and sweetly impelled by filial love, we shall obey from the heart the will of our heavenly Father.

Thus do all the announcements, and promises, and precepts, of the Christian religion stand related to the person and work of the Lord Jesus. He is emphatically *the theme* of the revelation of God. He is the Object of trust to the fainting spirit that weeps over its past iniquities, and deplores the spiritual bondage in which it has been held. He is the Centre which attracts the hearts of all the truly pious, and unites them in holy and heavenly love. He is the Fountain of blessing,—the Source of grace and peace, amidst the changes and sorrows of earth, and in the languor and exhaustion of the final conflict. He is the Giver of eternal life.

This is the adorable Person whom we have now to contemplate. May He assist our meditations, and lead every reader of these pages to the true knowledge of Himself, and to an eternal participation in His blessedness and triumph!

* Romans viii. 2. See also vi. 22.

PART I.

THE ETERNAL DEITY OF THE SON OF GOD,
AND THE GRADUAL DEVELOPMENT OF
THE MEDIATORIAL SCHEME.

CHAPTER I.

THE ORIGINAL AND ETERNAL GLORY OF THE SON OF GOD.

EVERY subject connected with the Divine nature requires to be approached by us in a spirit of lowly reverence. The infinite perfection of Him whom we contemplate, and the weakness of our own powers, equally demand this. Even when we inquire into the constitution and laws of the world around us—when we attempt to trace the minute and hidden processes which issue in the important results that meet us on every hand,—we soon discover that limits have been placed to our researches. The beautiful order and instructive adaptations of material nature unfold themselves indeed, yet more and more clearly, to our patient thought ; but even these evince an ever-active Power, the operations of which we cannot fully comprehend. When we extend our inquiries to the worlds on worlds which shine above us, and endeavour to trace their mutual relations, and to form a conception of the magnificent whole which the hand of God has formed ; we find that the grandeur of this subject is sufficient to overpower us, and that our utmost efforts, instead of enabling us to understand the universe, only disclose to us the vastness of the Divine empire, and the unbounded resources of the Divine mind. But when we attempt to rise to the contemplation

of God, and passing the bounds of time, to go even into the recesses of eternity, and to view Him as He is IN HIMSELF, we approach a yet loftier theme, and one of peculiar and ineffable sacredness. In the august presence of Deity, every feeling of vain curiosity should be repressed ; every tendency to bold speculation should be resisted ; and while we listen with profound attention to the discoveries which God has been pleased to make to us of Himself, we should bow before Him with mingled reverence and love. Like Moses, before the burning but unconsumed bush, we should feel that we stand on holy ground ; and we should tremble at the thought of presumptuously gazing upon that sight, which

“ Dazzles heaven, that brightest seraphim
Approach not, but with both wings veil their eyes.”

But although it is impossible for us to understand the deep mystery of the mode of the Divine existence, or to apprehend clearly and fully every perfection of the Divine nature, it is right that we should raise our minds to God, and meditate on Him with sacred interest. The knowledge of the Eternal One is the best and highest knowledge. The excellencies of created beings are all derived from Him ; they are but reflections of His inherent power, and wisdom, and holiness, and love. To Him, by a sweet and powerful attraction, every holy mind, throughout the universe, turns, to seek its peace and joy in the assurance of His friendship, and to yield itself to Him in willing and happy service. To know God, and to hold communion with Him, is the proper bliss of the human spirit. And in that series of revelations which it is our privilege to possess, the Most

High has shed a degree of light on His own peculiar glory, and has instructed us to worship Him as the Triune Jehovah.

In the very front indeed of the Divine communications to man, there stands the great and momentous truth, that there is ONE GOD. We are taught to look up to one Eternal, Almighty Being, as the Source of existence, the Creator and Lord of all. "Unto thee it was showed, that thou mightest know that the LORD He is God; there is none else beside Him."* "Hear, O Israel: Jehovah our Elohim is one Jehovah."† Between Jehovah, and every other being in the universe, there is an infinite disparity. All created intelligences have been produced by acts of the Divine will, and are sustained by the constant putting forth of the Divine power; but God exists in and of Himself, and all His perfections are inherent and essential. He is the fountain of life,—the original pattern and the source of moral loveliness,—and the giver of law to the universe of mind. He sitteth upon the throne; while all other beings wait upon Him, bend in willing adoration before His ineffable majesty, or bow reluctantly to the control of His almighty hand.

But while the revelation which God has been pleased to give to us, so distinctly affirms the unity of the Divine essence, it teaches us that in that essence there are mysterious personal distinctions, and it leads us to adore the one Jehovah, as the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. One of the most frequent appellations of the Most High in the writings of the Old Testament, is JEHOVAH ELOHIM; and while the former term expresses the essential unity of God, the very form of the latter

* Deuteronomy iv. 35.

† Deuteronomy vi. 4.

indicates that plurality in some sense belongs to Him who is the object of our adoration and love. The declaration which we have cited above becomes in this view remarkable and impressive: "Hear, O Israel: Jehovah our Elohim is one Jehovah." It implies a plurality in the mode of the Divine existence; but it affirms, at the same time, the unity of that glorious Being, before whom we are to bow with lowly reverence, and in the possession of whose friendship our highest happiness consists. Allusions to the Trinity of Persons in the one Godhead occur throughout the ancient revelation. When we listen to the formula of blessing which Aaron and his sons were commanded to use, we are reminded of this lofty mystery: "And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto Aaron and unto his sons, saying, On this wise ye shall bless the children of Israel, saying unto them, The LORD bless thee, and keep thee: the LORD make His face shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee: the LORD lift up His countenance upon thee, and give thee peace. And they shall put My name upon the children of Israel; and I will bless them."* And when we follow Isaiah, to gaze with him upon the glory of the Eternal God, and to contemplate the seraphim in the act of adoration, we hear from their lips the thrice-repeated acknowledgment of Jehovah as perfectly holy; while the statement of an inspired apostle, in a subsequent age, teaches us to regard this vision as manifesting the glory of Him who afterwards appeared on earth to redeem us. "In the year that king Uzziah died, I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and His train filled the temple. Above it stood the

* Numbers vi. 22—27.

seraphim: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the **LORD** of hosts: the whole earth is full of His glory.”* “These things,” says the apostle John, after adverting to the message which the prophet was commanded to deliver, “these things said Esaias, when he saw His glory, and spake of Him.”†

In the disclosures of the Divine purposes made to the patriarchs, and to some members of the house of Israel, we are led to contemplate One who in mysterious grandeur appears as “the Angel of Jehovah.” This was not an ordinary angel,—one of the pure and happy spirits that have been called into existence by the fiat of the Almighty, and that encircle His throne, to behold His glory, and receive His high commands; for although *sent* by the Father, and *revealing* Him to men, He claims Himself the incommunicable name of Jehovah, and stands arrayed in the loftiest attributes of eternal God-head. “And the Angel of the **LORD** called unto him out of heaven, and said, Abraham, Abraham: and he said, Here am I. And he said, Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou any thing unto him: for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from ME.” “And the Angel of the **LORD** called unto Abraham out of heaven the second time, and said, By Myself have I sworn, saith the **LORD**, for because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son: that in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is

* Isaiah vi. 1—3.

† John xii. 41.

upon the sea shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies; and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed My voice.”* “And the Angel of the **LORD** appeared unto him” (Moses) “in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush: and he looked, and, behold, the bush burned with fire, and the bush was not consumed. And Moses said, I will now turn aside, and see this great sight, why the bush is not burnt. And when the **LORD** saw that he turned aside to see, God called unto him out of the midst of the bush, and said, Moses, Moses. And he said, Here am I. And He said, Draw not nigh hither: put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground. Moreover He said, I am the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. And Moses hid his face; for he was afraid to look upon God.”† In other portions of the ancient Scriptures, likewise, our minds are directed to an august Person, distinct from every created being, and subsisting in a most intimate and peculiar relation to the Father. He is especially referred to as **THE SON**, who in the fulness of time should appear on earth, and, after His rejection by men, should be enthroned as the King of Zion, entitled to universal homage, and worthy of unlimited confidence. “I will declare the decree: the **LORD** hath said unto Me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten Thee. Ask of Me, and I shall give Thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for Thy possession. Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; Thou shalt dash them in pieces

* Genesis xxii. 11, 12, 15—18. Compare Hebrews vi. 13, 14.

† Exodus iii. 2—6.

like a potter's vessel. Be wise now therefore, O ye kings: be instructed, ye judges of the earth. Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son, lest He be angry, and ye perish from the way, when His wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in Him.”*

But the lofty truth which we are now contemplating—the proper Deity and eternal glory of the Son of God—is brought before us yet more clearly, in that revelation of the Divine character and government, to which every other was preparatory, and which we term emphatically “the Gospel.” We must listen to the recorded sayings of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and ponder the declarations of His inspired apostles, if we would form even a faint conception of that glory, in which He dwelt with the Father, before His manifestation on earth. Repeatedly did He affirm, in the course of His public ministry, His own *pre-existence* and *eternity*. He said to Nicodemus, “And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but He that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven.”† Alluding to the manna with which the people of God were sustained during their journey through the wilderness, He spoke of Himself as “the true bread from heaven,” as having come down from above to give life to the perishing, and to meet the craving of the human spirit for salvation and peace. “My Father giveth you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is He which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world.” And when the Jews who stood around Him exclaimed, “Lord, evermore give us this bread!” He replied with

* Psalm ii. 7—12.

† John iii. 13.

imitable beauty and force, “I am the bread of life: he that cometh to Me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on Me shall never thirst.”* And on a subsequent occasion, when He had referred to the lively interest with which Abraham looked forward to His day, and the sacred joy which clearer discoveries of His redeeming work called forth in the breast of that holy patriarch; and when the Jews objected to Him, “Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast Thou seen Abraham?” He answered with great solemnity and power, “Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am.”†

But the declarations of our Lord were not limited to the fact of His pre-existence. He spoke of His *peculiar and intimate relation to the Father*, as one which had subsisted from eternity, and which no human mind could fully comprehend. He affirmed that He was THE SON, the only begotten,—the object of the Father’s ineffable complacency,—and the gift of whom to our world, was the strongest proof of the Father’s love to man. Let us mark on this subject the following declarations of the Redeemer, recorded by two of the evangelists; and let us gaze with adoring love on the inherent dignity, and the condescending grace, of Him who appeared among us, and submitted to the humiliation and sorrow of the cross, to save and bless us. “God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him, should not perish, but have everlasting life.”‡ “All things are delivered unto Me of My Father: and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to

* John vi. 32—35. † John viii. 57, 58. ‡ John iii. 16.

whomsoever the Son will reveal Him."* "And now, O Father, glorify Thou Me with Thine own self with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was."† "Father, I will that they also whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am; that they may behold My glory, which thou hast given Me: for Thou lovedst Me before the foundation of the world."‡

Warned by the words of our Lord Himself, that the deep mystery of His relation to the Father is beyond the comprehension of any human mind, we shall not attempt to explain that relation, or presume to know God to perfection. The subject is too lofty and too sacred for the play of imagination, or the inductions of philosophical inquiry. We can only ponder the words which our Lord Himself has used, or which His inspired apostles have selected, to illustrate the glory in which He dwelt, as the only-begotten of the Father, before He clothed Himself with our humanity, and became our Brother and Redeemer. But this course *is* open to us; and the words of inspiration will be found to have a depth of meaning, which unfolds itself yet more and more to the devout and thoughtful mind. Let us advert to a few of the statements of the apostles of our Lord, on this exalted theme.

The apostle John, when commencing his narrative of the Redeemer's life and death, affirms, in the clearest and most decisive manner, His original and eternal glory: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by Him; and without Him was not any thing made

* Matthew xi. 27.

† John xvii. 5.

‡ John xvii. 24.

that was made." "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld His glory,—the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth."* Here the apostle leads us back in thought to the depths of eternity. We have to pass beyond the limits of measured duration,—beyond the moment when the first act of creative power was put forth,—and to think of the period when God Himself, the Unsearchable, was the only Being; but even then — "in the beginning"—the Word existed in intimate union with the Father, and one with Him in His essential glories and perfections. He is to be acknowledged and adored as the Creator of all things. His almighty energy gave being to the hosts of heaven, and endowed them with intelligence, and purity, and strength. It was at His bidding that material nature rose out of nothing; He has spread out the scenes of loveliness which meet our gaze; He has called into existence the various orders of creatures that people His universal empire; and He has formed man, to reflect His intellectual and moral glories, and to hold communion with the Triune Deity. But this adorable Person has revealed Himself to us, in a form which softens the lustre of His uncreated excellencies, and invites the approach of the humble and contrite spirit. He has assumed our nature in its lowliness and weakness; He has come to our earth, blighted by sin, and languishing under the woes which alienation from God must induce; and He has wrought out the scheme of the Eternal Father, for the recovery and ultimate glorification of all who receive Him as their Saviour and their Lord. This was the great truth

* John i. 1—3, 14.

on which the contemplative and susceptible mind of John delighted to dwell. He remembered, with lively interest, how the more than human glory of the Redeemer had beamed forth in His teaching, His miracles, and His entire deportment; and, with mingled awe and gratitude, he recognised in Him the only-begotten of the Father, manifested to bless our world, and to pour on every dark and mournful spirit the light of life.

The introduction to the first Epistle of this eminent servant and friend of the Lord Jesus shows, like the passage we have just considered, how habitually his mind reverted to the original glory of the Redeemer, and with how deep interest he dwelt on the fact, that he had been permitted to be with the incarnate Son, and to mark the developments of His unsullied purity and condescending love. “That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life; (for the Life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and show unto you that eternal Life which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us;) that which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ.”* Here we trace the characteristics of eternal Deity, as belonging to Him who, in the fulness of time, appeared on earth to redeem us; and yet we perceive that this august Person was in some sense distinct from the Father, though one with Him in nature, and power,

* 1 John i. 1—3.

and glory. He was "from the beginning,"—before any created mind glowed with intelligence and feeling, or any created thing had been introduced into existence. He was "that Eternal Life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us." He had shared from eternity in the high prerogative of the Father, to possess life in and of Himself. While in every creature life is derived and dependent, in Him it is inherent and essential. And He is the source of life to all. His energy communicates and sustains it; and while He causes the living frame to glow with warmth, and upholds every created mind in the possession of its intellectual powers, He imparts to the devout and obedient spirit the yet higher life of holy affections, and attracts it to Himself by a sweet and heavenly influence.

Let us now turn to a remarkable passage in the opening of the Epistle to the Hebrews, which affirms, in the most impressive manner, the Divine glory of the Redeemer, and unveils to us—as far as it can be unveiled—His peculiar relation to the Father. In contrast with former dispensations of religion, in which the Most High had spoken to men by His prophets, who could only partially and gradually reveal the purposes of redeeming holiness and love,—the inspired apostle places the glory of the Christian economy, as that in which THE SON Himself has appeared, to shed the light of truth on our minds, to offer a perfect sacrifice for human guilt, and then to rise to His mediatorial throne, to sway a sceptre of righteousness and grace over our world, until every hostile power shall bow before Him. "God, who at sundry times and

in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son, whom He hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also He made the worlds; who, being the brightness of His glory, and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high.* Here, as in the writings of St. John, our minds are carried back to the glory of the Son before He came to our world of sin and sorrow. He appears to the view of our faith in all the majesty of the Creator and Lord of the universe; to Him we are to look up, as even now sustaining the entire fabric of created nature; and we are reverently to conceive of Him—if, indeed, we may attempt to form a faint idea of the relations of the Divine nature—as the out-beaming of the Father's glory, and the express image, the exact resemblance, of His inscrutable essence. Light, the purest and loveliest of all material substances, is frequently referred to in the Holy Scriptures, to illustrate the perfections of the Eternal God. It stands as the chosen and most appropriate emblem of Him whose intellect is cloudless, whose purity is without a stain, and whose presence and energy are universally diffused. But here the illustration is applied to a subject which, above all others, is sacred and mysterious, and of which the most powerful human mind can form only a faint and inadequate conception,—the relation of the Son to the Eternal Father. He is the effulgence, the outstreaming, of the uncreated Light. All the Divine perfections belong

* Hebrews i. 1—3.

to Him; and this, by virtue of a relation grounded in the Divine essence, and inseparable from it. Thus it was, that when He assumed our nature, and became our substitute and sacrifice, He could, "*by Himself*, purge our sins," and open the way for the richest communications of grace and peace to our guilty and polluted world.

There is yet another passage of the Christian Scriptures which demands our attention when we attempt to raise our minds to the glory of the Redeemer in His pre-existent state. It occurs in the letter of St. Paul to the church at Philippi,—a letter distinguished by all the warmth and tenderness of pastoral love, and by the beautiful and impressive manner in which the apostle interweaves the great doctrines of our religion with allusions to his personal history, and exhortations to the duties of the Christian life. Among other admonitions which he urges on the Philippian believers, he calls upon them to cultivate an active and condescending benevolence,—a benevolence, in the exercise of which they should lose sight of their own advantage and honour, and seek, even at the sacrifice of their own comfort, to promote the welfare of others. Immediately, the example of the Redeemer rises to his view; and he dwells, with holy interest, on the self-sacrificing character of His love to man. "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.

Wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”* The *full* import of this sublime passage is beyond the apprehension of the loftiest human mind; but some of the views which it suggests to us are clear and striking. It affirms, with the greatest distinctness, the Divine glory of the Son, before He appeared on earth as a sharer of our weakness and sorrows. He was “in the form of God:” He subsisted and appeared from eternity, in all the majesty of the Father; and when the angelic hosts had been called into being by His power, He was the object of their adoration and love. He had a just and rightful claim to be equal with the Father; but He “emptied Himself”—He laid aside that glory in which He had subsisted from eternity,—“taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men.” The profound truth is thus suggested to us, that in the very act of assuming the nature of man, THE SON became the “righteous *Servant*” of the Father. When the apostle speaks of “the form of a servant,” he does not refer to one particular class of men, as distinguished from the higher and more favoured members of the human family; but he refers, as is evident from the clause which he immediately subjoins, to human nature generally. He teaches us, that *in* submitting to be “made in the likeness of men,” our Lord “took the form of a

* Philippians ii. 5—11.

servant.”* In this there is the deepest truth. Every created being stands in a relation of servitude to the Eternal Mind. Man, therefore, is by his very *nature* “a servant.” As the creature of God, he is bound to obey His injunctions, and to seek His glory. He cannot divest himself of the responsibility which the very relation of a creature imposes: the will of God becomes his authoritative rule of duty; and to that will he must unhesitatingly bow. Here then we perceive the condescension of the Son. In His original state of glory He was *not* a servant; He was one with the Father, possessed of all His perfections, and arrayed in all His majesty. But by allying Himself to our weak and suffering humanity, He assumed the form of a servant of God; and thus prepared the way for the yet deeper humiliation of the garden and the cross.

But here we pause. Enough has been said to show, that He who came to earth to redeem us had subsisted from eternity in intimate union with the Father, and was one with Him in all the glories of the Godhead. We attempt not to penetrate into this high mystery, or with irreverent gaze to approach the dazzling brightness of the Eternal Light. We receive with humble faith the teaching of the inspired record, and adore the

* This view has been very clearly brought out by Bishop Pearson, in his elaborate “Exposition of the Creed,” Art. II. After giving as the literal translation of the apostle’s words that which we have adopted above,—“But emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men,”—he adds, “Where, if any man doubt how Christ emptied Himself, the text will satisfy him,—‘by taking the form of a servant;’ if any still question, how He took the form of a servant, he hath the apostle’s resolution, —‘by being made in the likeness of men.’”

Triune Deity. Conscious of the weakness of our own powers, we gratefully embrace the testimony of God ; and, with the universal church, we rejoice to sing,—

“ Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost :
As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be,
world without end. Amen.”

CHAPTER II.

PREPARATIONS FOR THE MANIFESTATION OF THE SON OF GOD ON EARTH.—THE PATRIARCHAL AGE.

WHEN the loveliness of paradise was blighted by sin, and the first human pair, formed to enjoy the complacent smile of God, and to be happy in obeying His precepts, had sunk down into a state of guilt and alienation, Divine mercy interposed to suspend the full infliction of the threatened penalty, and to provide for their recovery and salvation. This world, destined to be the theatre of the most peculiar and affecting manifestations of the Divine attributes,* was placed immediately under a gracious economy, founded on that interposition of the Son which should, in the fulness of time, take place.† The hope of our first parents, and of their descendants in successive generations, was directed to a great Deliverer, who should hereafter arise, to overthrow the malignant power which had seduced them from their allegiance to Jehovah, and brought upon them the bitterness and sorrow of the curse. To that Deliverer.

* Ephesians iii. 9—11.

† 1 Peter i. 19—21.

and to the Atonement for sin which He should offer, the Divine government had respect in every act of grace, in every communication of peace and strength to the human spirit.

It was the arrangement of Divine wisdom, that the plan of human recovery should be *gradually unfolded*. Ages were to elapse before the manifestation of the great Restorer in our world; and during these, the facts of the mediatorial scheme were to be shadowed forth by the symbols of typical dispensations, and the predictions of inspired men. A degree of light was thus shed on the purposes of God, sufficient to guide and sustain the faith of the humble mind, and to awaken hope of spiritual blessings. But that light was dim and feeble, in comparison of the disclosures of truth which are made to us; and even the prophets who arose in successive ages, and who, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, gave utterance to the sublimest truths relative to the person of the Redeemer, the deep sacrificial sufferings which He should undergo, and the blessings and glories of His reign, could not comprehend the *full* import of their own impressive sayings, or understand in what manner their apparently conflicting declarations were to be harmonised in the history of the Messiah. They dwelt on these themes, indeed, with earnest interest, and often pondered the emphatic words which they were inspired to utter in relation to the great Deliverer; but though enough was revealed to them to direct their faith, and to guide them into the way of life and peace, they ever felt and acknowledged that many truths connected with the scheme of redeeming mercy were shrouded in mystery, and could only

be made plain when the Messiah Himself should appear, and "the dispensation of the fulness of times" be brought in. The apostle Peter has placed this subject before us in a clear and impressive manner, in his first Epistle:— "Of which salvation the prophets have inquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you: searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow. Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the Gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; which things the angels desire to look into."*

It is not, perhaps, for us to understand all the reasons of the arrangement, that the manifestation of the Redeemer should thus be delayed, and a series of preparatory announcements and typical services should introduce His coming. We can indeed perceive, that such an arrangement was in accordance with that law of *progressive development*, which seems to be impressed on all the works and procedures of the Most High. We can perceive, also, that it tended to mark the *dignity* of the great Restorer, and the vast *importance* of His work. Through every period of the world's history, human expectation had been directed to His coming, and the hopes of the truly pious had all centred in Him. Prophets, and kings, and righteous men, had looked forward with eager desire to the manifestation of

* 1 Peter i. 10—12. See also 2 Peter i. 19—21.

the promised Saviour;* and when, at length, He appeared, He came to meet the wants, to satisfy the cravings, of our common humanity.† And it is a consideration not unworthy of our regard, that during the period which intervened between the first announcement of a Deliverer, and His actual appearance, the history of our world, though most affecting and fearful, presented *moral lessons* of deep interest to the rational universe. Man wandered further and yet further from God, until at last he was enveloped in the dense darkness of superstition and idolatry; and then was made apparent the utter inadequacy of his own resources, to raise himself to the true knowledge of Jehovah, to break the fetters of sinful and malignant passions, and to invest his nature with moral loveliness. “For after that, in the wisdom of God, the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.”‡ The tendency of sin to spread discord and misery around was fearfully exemplified. The ungodly element of our depraved humanity developed itself in connection with high attainments in literature, philosophy, and art; and it neutralised their softening influence,—it kept the heart selfish, and hard, and cruel,—it vitiated every relation,—and filled our world with sensuality, oppression, and blood.

But the inquiry which is now before us relates to the *intimations themselves* which were given of the Redeemer’s person, and character, and work. The Scriptures of the Old Testament are full of Christ. Our Lord Himself has taught us this, in those declarations of His which are recorded by His apostles. To the un-

* Luke x. 23, 24. † Haggai ii. 7. ‡ 1 Corinthians i. 21.

lieving Jews, He said, “Search the Scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of Me.”* Repeatedly did He adduce passages from the prophetic writings, as about to be fulfilled in His own history; and when He had suffered for sin, and had risen from the dead, He reminded the faithful companions of His toils, that the great events which they had witnessed, and which they were to proclaim to mankind, as lying at the basis of the Divine plans of mercy, had been shadowed forth in the law of Moses, the declarations of the prophets, and the sacred hymns of the Jewish church. “And He said unto them, These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning Me. Then opened He their understanding, that they might understand the Scriptures; and said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day; and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And ye are witnesses of these things.”†

When we open the record of the Divine dispensations towards our world, we find, that amidst the gloom and terror which filled the minds of our first parents, when they stood arraigned and convicted before their Creator, a ray of light and comfort beamed upon them from the Divine benignity. In the curse pronounced on the serpent, the Most High referred, though in general and figurative language, to a great Deliverer, who should appear to vanquish their envious and malignant seducer:

* John v. 39.

† Luke xxiv. 44—48.

"And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise His heel."* The writings of the New Testament clearly show, that the serpent was but the instrument of a fallen intelligence, that sought to frustrate the plans of God, and to alienate from Him, and involve in moral disorder and ruin, that new race which His power and wisdom had just called into existence. To that fallen and malicious spirit, this part of the curse was directed; and while it set forth the ultimate overthrow of his usurped dominion, and the confusion and dismay in which he should be at last involved, it gave hope and comfort to the sorrowful minds of our first parents. It announced the important fact, that in the fulness of time One should arise, who should be, in a peculiar sense, the offspring of the woman, and who, after Himself suffering from the assaults of the great adversary of our race, should triumph over him, and rescue from his power every penitent believer.

The suffering which the Messiah was to undergo was placed before the minds of the earliest members of the human family, in another and more affecting aspect, by the institution of *sacrifices*. The *precise* directions which were given to them, relative to the method of approach to God, by the shedding of the blood of innocent and perfect victims, must ever remain involved in obscurity; since the book of Genesis supplies us only with incidental notices of the dispensations of God towards them, and does not present to us a full development of every communication with which they were favoured. It is impossible, also, clearly to trace the *extent* of their

* Genesis iii. 15.

information respecting that great atonement which these sacrifices were intended to shadow forth. But we are authorised to infer, from the very nature of the case, and from the references made in Scripture to the primitive sacrifices, that they were of Divine appointment, and that their typical character was intimated with a considerable degree of clearness. We can scarcely suppose that man, without any express injunction, would have adopted such a method of seeking the Divine favour; nor can we imagine that the Most High, who so distinctly requires us to have respect to His own instructions, rather than to the commandments of men, in all our acts of worship, would have distinguished the primitive sacrifices with so marked and decisive tokens of His approval, if they had not been expressly enjoined by Himself. Yet the offering of Abel, who "brought of the firstlings of his flock, and of the fat thereof," was accepted by Jehovah, while that of Cain, who brought only of "the fruit of the ground," was utterly rejected.* The friends of Job, also, were directed by God to take seven bullocks and seven rams, and go to him whose mind they had wounded, and offer up for themselves a burnt-offering, while Job prayed on their behalf.† Besides, the reasoning of St. Paul, in his Epistle to the Hebrews, on the sacrifice of Abel, clearly implies the express appointment of such a method of drawing near to God. He refers to that sacrifice as an expression of Abel's *faith*,—that living, active principle, which, resting upon the sure ground of the Divine testimony, realises the objects which that testimony places before it, though unseen by the eye of sense, and takes

* Genesis iv. 3—5.

† Job xlii. 8.

hold of every promise, with an unwavering assurance that it shall be actually fulfilled. In the very nature of things, faith, considered as a religious act, must have respect to some Divine communication, some disclosure of the character and purposes of God. If, then, the sacrifice of Abel was the active expression of his faith, it must have been offered in obedience to the Divine requirements, with a recognition of the plan of mercy established by the Most High, and in the hope of the spiritual blessings which were held forth by God Himself to the devout worshipper. That sacrifice was openly accepted by Jehovah; and the offerer, though he soon fell beneath the murderous stroke of his brother's hand, still speaks to us, and proclaims the virtue of that great Atonement to which he looked forward, and the blessedness of simple trust in the Divine word, and unhesitating obedience to the Divine commands. "By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he being dead yet speaketh."*

In reflecting, therefore, on the circumstances of the patriarchs, and endeavouring to conceive of the intimations which were given to them of the Divine purposes relative to the great Restorer, we must connect with the first promise, so often pondered by every thoughtful and serious mind, the Divine appointment of sacrifice, as the method of approach to the throne of infinite purity. This institution was obviously *symbolical*. There was something in the very act of presenting a valuable animal, perfect in its kind, that it might be slain, and

* Hebrews xi. 4.

its blood poured out before Jehovah, and doing this with a lowly confession of personal sinfulness, which was calculated to instruct and impress the devout mind. It implied an acknowledgment of the injury done to the Divine government by sin;—it exhibited death as the necessary result, and proper punishment, of transgression;—it recognised the mercy and holiness of God, as meeting the case of our fallen and polluted race, only through the substitution of suffering;—and, since it was impossible that the blood of bulls, and goats, and lambs, could of itself take away sin, it set forth a Victim of a far higher character, distinguished by every excellence, and free from every stain, who in the fulness of time should die as the atonement for human guilt. These truths were apprehended, just in proportion as the mind was thoughtful and earnest in reference to spiritual things. While many who engaged in the external duties of religion, without a sincere desire of enjoying the friendship of God, and living to His glory, retired from their sacrifices without any special blessing, or any distinct and vivid impression of the truths which they shadowed forth; Divine light was poured upon the mind that truly waited upon God, and the purposes of redeeming love were partially unfolded to it. We cannot doubt that Enoch, who “walked with God,”* was favoured with some discoveries of the Messiah’s character, and sufferings, and triumphs; or that Noah, whose faith in the Divine declarations and promises was so signally manifested in the preparation of the ark, amidst the scoffs of the ungodly,† clung with unwavering confidence to the

* Genesis v. 24; Hebrews xi. 5.

† Hebrews xi. 7.

first promise given to fallen man, and cherished the hope of that Deliverer, through whom eternal life should be imparted to His believing and obedient people.

But in tracing the disclosures of the plan of human recovery, which the Most High was pleased to make to the patriarchs, we are now brought to the history of that eminent servant and friend of God, to whom the assurance was given that, from among *his* descendants, the great Deliverer should arise. The leading incidents in the life of Abraham must ever awaken a lively interest in the mind of the thoughtful Christian. He was called to leave his country and kindred, and to go forth to a land which God would show unto him; and the promise was even then made to him, "I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: and I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed."* In obedience to the Divine command, Abram left his father's house, and went forth as a pilgrim to the land of Canaan. Having resided there for a while, he was compelled by a famine to go down into Egypt, where he experienced the signal interposition of God on his behalf, and that of the sharer of his joys and hopes. Being rescued from the shame and suffering to which he had exposed himself through a departure from simplicity and candour, he returned to the land of promise, and there gratefully worshipped his Almighty Protector and Friend. Years rolled on; and he whose descendants were to be numerous as the stars of heaven, and the dust of the earth, and from whom

* Genesis xii. 2, 3.

the Messiah Himself was to spring, remained childless and alone. But his faith in the Divine promise was not impaired by this severe trial. He knew the infinite power of Him who had engaged to bless him, and to multiply his family ; and he knew, also, that the plan of infinite wisdom, and holiness, and love, as to the great Restorer of our race,—mysterious as that plan, in many respects, now was,—must be accomplished. “He believed God ; and it was counted unto him for righteousness.”* In process of time, Abram, acting upon the suggestion of his wife, became the father of Ishmael, by her hand-maid Hagar ; but it was not thus that the Divine purposes were to be fulfilled. When a further trial of his faith and patience had taken place, and Abram himself had reached the age of ninety-nine years, it pleased God to favour him with a more ample discovery of His gracious designs. He changed his name to Abraham, to intimate that he should be “a father of many nations ;” He promised to be a God unto him, and to his seed after him ; He appointed the rite of circumcision, as a seal of that special covenant which He established with him ; and He assured him, that Sarai his wife—whose name He now changed to Sarah—should indeed bear him a son, though, according to the course of nature, it was impossible that she should become a mother.† Gratefully did the aged patriarch receive these announcements ; but his fatherly affection for Ishmael led him to intercede for him, and he said unto God, “O that Ishmael might live before Thee !” The reply of Jehovah showed him, that while Ishmael should be cared for, and his descendants multiplied, yet the

* Genesis xv. 6 ; Romans iv. 3. † Genesis xvii. 1—16.

covenant of blessing to mankind was to be established in the line of Isaac, whom Sarah should bear unto him in the next year. "And God said, Sarah thy wife shall bear thee a son indeed; and thou shalt call his name Isaac: and I will establish My covenant with him for an everlasting covenant, and with his seed after him. And as for Ishmael, I have heard thee: behold, I have blessed him, and will make him fruitful, and will multiply him exceedingly; twelve princes shall he beget, and I will make him a great nation. But My covenant will I establish with Isaac, whom Sarah shall bear unto thee at this set time in the next year."*

This brief review of the history of Abraham, and of the circumstances under which Isaac, the son of promise, was given to him, is necessary to prepare us to form a right conception of one of the most illustrious *types* of the Redeemer. The arrangements of Divine Providence, which we have contemplated, were not only intended to try the faith of Abraham, and his submission to the Divine will, but also to invest with peculiar interest *him* who was thus explicitly marked out as the ancestor of the Messiah, and whose birth was the pledge that all the covenant-engagements of God would indeed be performed. The promise so long delayed, but to the accomplishment of which the patriarch had looked forward with holy confidence, was at length fulfilled; and it was fulfilled under circumstances which marked a special intervention of Divine power, that Abraham and Sarah, whenever they looked upon their beloved Isaac, might remember that he was indeed the gift of God to them. Thus, after a series of ages, during which human

* Genesis xvii. 19—21.

expectation had been directed to the Messiah's coming, He at length appeared to bless our world; while all the circumstances of His advent—though widely different from those which we have just considered—evinced the immediate agency of God.

But the history of Abraham, now combined with that of his distinguished son, presents a yet more remarkable arrangement of Divine wisdom, and one which was doubtless intended to shed a degree of light on the sacrifice of the Son of God, when, in the fulness of time, He should be manifested in our world. The mind of Abraham had often dwelt with deep interest on the plan of human redemption; and while he gratefully pondered those intimations of the Divine purposes with which he had been already favoured, and reflected on the distinguished honour which had been conferred on himself, that from among his descendants the great Deliverer should arise, he had longed for clearer and ampler discoveries of the Saviour's person, and character, and work. We are authorised, by the express declaration of our Lord Himself, to affirm, that such views and feelings had long filled the mind of Abraham; and that his pious wish was granted by the Most High, so as to call forth his lively gratitude and joy. "Your father Abraham exultingly hoped to see My day; and he saw it, and was glad."* There can be little doubt, that these clearer discoveries of the plan of human recovery

* John viii. 56. No apology seems to be required for deviating from our authorised version, in the translation of the first clause of this verse. The term *ηγαλλιάσατο*, which occurs in the original, is very expressive, and appears, in this instance, to combine the idea of *earnest desire* with that of *exulting hope*. It is difficult to convey its full and precise import in any single phrase.

were made to Abraham, in connection with the severest trial to which his faith was ever subjected. Long had he watched, with deepening interest, the formation and development of Isaac's character, as he had grown up from infancy and childhood to early manhood; and with holy exultation had he thought of him as the special gift of God, and the pledge of the ultimate and perfect accomplishment of all the Divine engagements. But while he thus looked upon Isaac, not only with parental fondness, but with *a religious interest*, since it was in *his* line that the covenant of God was to be established, the command was given to him,—“Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt-offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of.”* To meet the gush of parental feeling which such a command could not fail to call forth, the higher and more sacred principle of *trust in God* was brought by Divine grace into active operation; and thus the mind of Abraham soon regained its usual tranquillity and peace. He reflected on the express engagement of the Most High, that in the line of Isaac there should arise that Seed of his, in whom all the nations of the earth should be blessed; he knew that the promises of Jehovah could not fail; and as it was essential to their fulfilment that Isaac should live, and become a father, he was assured that even if God should permit him to bleed beneath the sacrificial knife, He would reanimate his lifeless frame. Sustained by this lofty trust in the Divine fidelity and power, Abraham went forward in the path of obedience. The conflict of feeling through

* Genesis xxii. 2.

which he had passed, and the active exercise of religious principle which so soon gave serenity to his mind, prepared him to receive a vivid impression of the great truths which the Most High, on this occasion, designed to teach him. And when, at length, the mysterious transaction was brought to a close, and Isaac was given back to his affectionate father, with a yet more solemn renewal of the covenant-promise, we have every reason to believe that Abraham, being favoured with a special illumination from above, beheld in this arrangement a remarkable type of the Messiah's sufferings, and an illustration of the great features of the economy of redemption. Here was a father giving his own son, and the son of his strongest and tenderest love, to be a sacrifice. Here was that son yielding himself without resistance to his father's will, and submitting to be bound and laid upon the altar, that he might be slain. Here—when the typical transaction had been carried as far as it could be, without the actual infliction of death upon the son of promise,—when Abraham had even lifted his hand to slay his son, and was restrained, at the critical moment, by the express command of God,—was the substitution of a ram caught in a thicket, in the place of the nobler offering, to remind the patriarch that all the sacrifices which were then presented were but figures of that great and efficacious Atonement which, in the fulness of time, Jchovah Himself would provide. And then, as the issue of the whole, there was the recovered life of him in whom the patriarch saw the type of an illustrious and powerful Saviour; and there was the renewed and solemnly confirmed assurance, that he should himself be blessed,—

spiritually and eternally blessed,—and that through his seed the richest blessings should flow to all the families of the earth. The typical character of this remarkable transaction may not only be inferred from the analogy of the Divine arrangements, but is placed even beyond a doubt by the statement of St. Paul in his Epistle to the Hebrews:—"By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall thy seed be called: accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure."* Even, then, if Abraham himself had remained ignorant of the truths which were thus symbolically represented, we who are favoured with clearer light must have turned to the intended offering up of Isaac, as an instructive type of the sacrifice of the Redeemer. But when we remember our Lord's own words, that Abraham "saw His day, and was glad," we can scarcely doubt that a peculiar illumination was vouchsafed to him on this memorable occasion; and that the severest trial of his submission and faith was the means, employed by Divine wisdom, to afford him the clearest views on that great subject, on which he had so often meditated with earnest desire and hope.

It is not necessary that we should trace the history of the chosen family through all its vicissitudes. That history is given to us in the Sacred Writings, with inimitable beauty and simplicity; and to these records every thoughtful and devout mind will turn with lively interest. The character of Isaac presents to us a calmness and love of peace, produced and sustained by communion with God; and though his heart clung with

* Hebrews xi. 17—19.

peculiar fondness to his elder son Esau, he acquiesced in the Divine arrangement, that Jacob, the younger, should become the head of the more powerful nation, and that in his line the promise made to Abraham should be fulfilled. When he finally parted with Jacob, and sent him to Padan-aram, he gave him, deliberately and affectionately, his choicest benediction:—"God Almighty bless thee, and make thee fruitful, and multiply thee, that thou mayest be a multitude of people; and give thee the blessing of Abraham, to thee, and to thy seed with thee; that thou mayest inherit the land wherein thou art a stranger, which God gave unto Abraham."* The life of Jacob opened with unfavourable indications of his probable career; but the great mercy of God, while it chastened him for his unfaithfulness and sin, rescued him from the dominion of unholy principles, and invested him with the true dignity of humble piety. Memorable was the night which he spent in earnest, agonizing prayer, when his approaching interview with Esau reminded him of his former unkindness and deceit, and showed him that his only refuge was in the protection and care of God. We can but conjecture the varied exercises of his spirit, when he wrestled in importunate supplication with the uncreated Angel, and received, at length, His effectual blessing. But from that conflict he came forth renewed and refreshed in spirit; and with mingled reverence and gratitude he called the name of the spot "Peniel:" acknowledging, "I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved."† Sustained by the promises of God during the changes of his eventful life, he was cheered, in the evening of

* Genesis xxviii. 3, 4.

† Genesis xxxii. 30.

his days, by the presence of all his children, and especially of his distinguished son Joseph; and at length, as he lay in peace on the bed of death, he prophetically declared, that the Messiah should spring from the tribe of Judah, and that that tribe should not finally lose a native government, until "Shiloh"—the rightful and pacific Sovereign—should appear to receive the homage of the nations, and to impart blessings to all of every land who should come to Him and bow to His gracious sceptre.* To the salvation of God the aged Israel looked with deep and earnest interest; and as he approached the close of life, he felt that the promise of the great Restorer, and of peace and life through Him, was inexpressibly dear. And thus, amidst the blessings which he pronounced on his children, and the prophetic intimations which he gave of the history of their descendants, he exclaimed with pious fervour, "For Thy salvation have I waited, O Jehovah!"†

Here we may close our review of the patriarchal age, and of the announcements which were made to the earlier members of the human family, relative to the Messiah's person, and character, and work. We have next to inquire into that peculiar economy which the Most High established with the race of Israel, when He led them forth from the bondage of Egypt,—an economy designed not only to preserve the true knowledge of Himself, amidst the deepening gloom of heathenism, but to prepare the way, by a beautiful and perfect system of types, and by numerous prophetic declarations, for the actual appearance of the Son of God on earth.

* Genesis xlix. 10.

† Genesis xlix. 18.

CHAPTER III.

PREPARATIONS FOR THE MANIFESTATION OF THE SON OF GOD
ON EARTH.—THE MOSAIC ECONOMY.

IN tracing the arrangements which were deemed necessary by Divine wisdom to precede the manifestation of the Messiah among men, we have now come to that important era in the world's history, when the descendants of Jacob, multiplied to hundreds of thousands, were brought out of Egypt, amidst the fearful displays of Jehovah's power, and the most convincing proofs of His exclusive Godhead. That people, already separated from the mass of the nations, and brought into a covenant-relation to God, were now favoured with fresh disclosures of Jehovah's will, and placed under an elaborate typical economy, intended to shadow forth the great facts of our Lord's mediatorial undertaking, and the leading features of His gracious and benignant reign.

The entire history of the people of Israel, at this eventful period, must be regarded as *typical*. It was designed to illustrate the dealings of God with His church in every age, and the blessings which He confers upon all who are spiritual and devout. The rescue of the Israelites from the oppression and bondage of Egypt, formed a type of the deliverance of all who come to Christ from a state of spiritual captivity, and the rending asunder of those bonds with which our sinful passions, and the malignant power of Satan, have

encircled us. The manna with which their wants were supplied, as they journeyed through the wilderness, was a beautiful emblem of Him who is "the bread of life,"— who came down from heaven to revive the fainting spirits of men, and to impart nourishment and strength to all His people.* The water which gushed from the rock smitten with the rod of Moses, and of which, as it followed their wanderings, the Israelites again and again drank, was an emblem of that stream of living influence which flows to us from Christ,— the Rock of ages smitten and pierced for us.† The peculiar and remarkable manner in which God Himself directed the movements of this people, going before them in the pillar of a cloud, and indicating the spots where they should rest, and the times at which they should resume their journey, was illustrative of the special care which He exercises over all His devout and faithful people,—though He now works in secrecy and silence, and the guidance of His hand is not made visible to man. The judgments which fell on the perverse and disobedient,—on those who refused to believe the Divine promises, and treated the declarations and warnings of the Most High with guilty neglect,—were premonitory of the visitations of wrath which should descend on all, in every age, who rely not on the Divine word, or who openly violate the Divine commands.‡ The intimate connection which was established and maintained, between their fidelity to God, and their success over the enemies that assailed them, was an instructive lesson to us, that the secret of our strength lies in communion with God,

* John vi. 30—35; 1 Corinthians x. 3. † 1 Corinthians x. 4.

‡ 1 Corinthians x. 5—11; Hebrews iii. 7—19.

and the habitual cultivation of His friendship. And the entrance of the second generation, together with Joshua and Caleb, into the promised land, formed a type of the ultimate admission of the true Israel of God into the heavenly Canaan,—the region of eternal peace, security, and joy.*

Soon after the people of Israel had gone forth from their captivity, and had passed in safety through the Red Sea, — the waters of which, in obedience to the command of Jehovah, opened to them a way, and then returned and overwhelmed the Egyptians,—they were summoned to receive *the law* from Him who had appeared as their Deliverer, and whose messenger and servant Moses was. Amidst the clouds and darkness of Sinai,—the thunder rolling, and an unearthly trumpet proclaiming the presence of the Universal Sovereign,—the great moral precepts of the law were declared by God Himself. This impressive scene was partly intended to show the awful justice of the Divine government, and the intense hatred which sin calls forth in the Divine mind. As the assembled nation gazed upon the terrors of Sinai, and listened to that voice which had called nature into existence, they could not but feel that it is a fearful thing to sin against God, and that to the guilty and impenitent He is a consuming fire. Even Moses, though he had been favoured with so intimate communion with the Most High, stood appalled before that sight, and trembled with emotions of awe. This scene was intended also to invest with peculiar sacredness the commandments which were now issued by Jehovah Himself,—commandments founded on the

* Hebrews iv.

relations in which mankind stand to Him and to each other, and thus retaining their validity under every dispensation of religion. But this overwhelming display of Jehovah's majesty was followed by a series of communications, in which Moses was the medium of announcing the Divine will to the people of Israel. Laws were given to them, relative to their political arrangements, their judicial proceedings, and their social relations; and these laws it was the province of the magistrates to administer, under God, the acknowledged Sovereign of the Hebrew state. The Most High required, also, that a tabernacle should be prepared for His worship; the plan of this tabernacle was explicitly and minutely laid down; an elaborate system of sacrifice was established; and a distinct order of priesthood was appointed, to draw near unto God in the special duties of His sanctuary.

The economy, thus introduced, occupies an important place in the series of preparations for the manifestation of the Son of God upon earth. Here was a people, separated from the mass of mankind, and acknowledged by God as His visible church: here was a system of typical worship, expressly arranged by the Divine command;* and every thing in this worship pointed either to the fact of our redemption by a nobler Sacrifice, and a far higher Priest, or to the rich and copious spiritual blessings which He should dispense to the humble and believing mind. The tabernacle of Moses, and afterwards the temple, stood as a centre of religious light, diffusing some rays of heavenly truth upon this dark and sinful world; inviting the approach of men of

* Hebrews viii. 5.

every land to worship Jehovah, the God of Israel ; and directing the hope of the thoughtful and devout to the coming Saviour, and the gracious reign of God over the hearts of men.

It is not necessary to examine, in detail, all the sacrifices which were required under the Mosaic dispensation. It appears unquestionable that the far greater number of them were *expiatory*. The leading principle of the entire system is stated by the apostle Paul, in his Epistle to the Hebrews :—“ And almost all things are by the law purged with blood ; and without shedding of blood is no remission.”* The displeasure of God against sin of every kind was thus distinctly and prominently set forth ; and the throne of Deity was represented as guarded from the approach of every impure and sinful man, and only accessible through a Mediator, who should sprinkle there the blood of atonement. The structure and arrangements of the tabernacle itself present to us a series of beautiful and instructive symbols. In addition to the court provided for pious Gentiles, and that in which the Israelites, and those proselytes who had submitted to circumcision, worshipped, the tabernacle contained two principal apartments. The former of these was termed, simply, the sanctuary, or holy place ; and it was open to the priests generally, who there conducted the service of God, according to the form which the law prescribed. In this sanctuary there stood the golden candlestick, emitting from its seven branches a clear and steady light,—a beautiful emblem of that spiritual illumination which God imparts to His true worshippers, and which they are to reflect upon the

* Hebrews ix. 22.

world around. Here, too, was the table of shew-bread, to represent the constant supply of spiritual nourishment which is vouchsafed to the people of God. Here was the altar of incense, from which a fragrant odour ascended to Jehovah, as an emblem of His people's thanksgivings and prayers; and here was the sacred fire, which had been kindled from heaven, and which the priests were charged to keep continually burning, to show us that our worship can then only be pleasing to God, when it ascends in the flame of heaven-enkindled affections, and that the holy love which God imparts to the believing mind must be habitually guarded and maintained. Beautifully does all this represent the worship of the church of Christ on earth. His believing people, sanctified by His Spirit, and constituted priests unto God, through the virtue of His blood, offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable through Him,* and receive, as they wait upon God, the richest communications of light, and peace, and strength. But the inner sanctuary presents to us a type of the heavenly world;† and as we reflect on the arrangements respecting it, we are led to contemplate a Priest whose functions should be peculiar and exclusive. There, sheltered from the gaze of every eye, by the interposing veil, was the ark of the covenant, with the figures of the cherubim attached to it,—their wings being extended, and their faces bent, as in earnest but reverent contemplation, towards the covering of the ark, or mercy-seat. Within that ark were placed the tables of God's holy law,—the law which He Himself announced amidst the terrors of Sinai; and from between the cherubim, above the mercy-seat,

* 1 Peter ii. 5.

† Hebrews ix. 23, 24.

there appeared the shekinah, the visible symbol of Jehovah's presence. But into this most holy place not one of the ordinary priests might enter. The high priest alone, and he only once in the year, on the great day of national expiation, could venture to draw aside that veil, and amidst the smoke of burning incense, the cloud of which was to cover the mercy-seat, sprinkle the blood of atonement on that type of Jehovah's throne. Here was an emblem of One who should be far more glorious than all His people, and who should even go into heaven itself, to present on their behalf, not the blood of typical sacrifices, but an offering suited to the pre-eminence of His own person and character,—the offering even of His own most precious blood.* But through Him, the very throne of Deity is now accessible to every humble and devout spirit. The veil which separated the holy of holies from the outer sanctuary, was rent asunder when He expired upon the cross. And now, without that oppressive dread which often filled the mind of the high priest of Israel, when the day of national expiation came round, lest in any thing he should fail of his prescribed duties as he approached the presence of Jehovah, and incur death as the penalty of his neglect,—now, even with *cheerful confidence* we may come, through the blood of Jesus, to the throne of our Father in heaven, and bear away the spiritual blessings which we need.†

Among the types of the Redeemer which the sacrificial system of the law embraced, we may select the paschal lamb, as one of the most remarkable and instructive. The passover was instituted at a momentous

* Hebrews ix. 11, 12, 24—26. † Hebrews iv. 16; x. 19—23.

crisis in the history of the Hebrew nation. The king of Egypt, who held them in bondage, had resisted every application made to him, and had hardened his heart against every visitation of Divine judgment; and now Jehovah was about to interpose, and by one fearful stroke to spread bereavement and sorrow through the land of Egypt, and rescue His people from the yoke of the oppressor. The destroying angel was about to pass through that land, and smite the first-born of every family, from the sovereign in his palace to the humblest of his subjects. But the families of Israel were directed to take each a lamb, a male of the first year, without blemish, and to sprinkle its blood on the lintel and the two side-posts of their doors; and the gracious engagement was made with them, that the destroying angel should pass over every house where this consecrated token was found, and that, in that very night, the Egyptians, dismayed and confounded, would themselves urge them to depart.* The passover, instituted at this eventful period, was to be observed by the successive generations of Israel, in remembrance of the mercy of God shown to their forefathers, and with a lively hope of His continued favour and blessing. In all this we behold a type of Him who, in the fulness of time, appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. He is emphatically "the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world;"† and as we go back, in thought, to the transactions of that memorable night when the destroying angel was arrested by the sprinkled blood, and the oppressed and groaning Israelites were led forth from their captivity, we triumph in a yet

* Exodus xii. 3—28.

† John i. 29.

greater redemption, and gratefully exclaim with the apostle, "Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us."* He who, on the accursed tree, bowed His head under the pressure of our guilt, and poured out His sacred blood to rescue us from death, was, like the paschal lamb, a spotless and perfect Victim;†—He was *the* Victim appointed by the infinite wisdom, and holiness, and love of the Eternal Father, that in every act of grace to man all the perfections of His character might remain unsullied, and the principles of His government be preserved inviolate. In many minute particulars, also, the death of the adorable Redeemer corresponded with the circumstances which attended the offering up of the paschal lamb. It occurred at the time of the paschal solemnity; and as it was required that "not a bone" of the offered lamb "should be broken,"‡ so even the rude soldiers, who broke the legs of the two that were crucified with our Lord, forbore—though without any knowledge of the design they were fulfilling—to break His legs, or to mangle His sacred body.§ And as the blood of the lamb was to be sprinkled, in order to secure the preservation of any family, so must we come, as individuals, to the Lord Jesus Christ as crucified for us, and seek to have His blood sprinkled upon our conscience and our heart.

But while the sacrificial rites of the Jewish church thus shadowed forth the perfect atonement which should eventually be offered, that church was favoured also with a succession of inspired men, who spoke of the great Deliverer, and of the salvation which He should bestow.

* 1 Corinthians v. 7. † 1 Peter i. 19. ‡ Exodus xii. 46.

§ John xix. 31—36.

The light of prophecy gradually became clearer and more distinct, in relation to the great object of human confidence and hope. It did not indeed dissipate every cloud which rested on the arrangements of the Most High for our spiritual recovery; but it directed the attention of men to Him who was to come, as possessed of mysterious dignity, as enduring the greatest sufferings and sorrow, and then as swaying a sceptre of righteousness, and truth, and grace, over our redeemed world. Many of the predictions of the ancient Scriptures must have appeared obscure and perplexing to those who lived before our Lord's manifestation in the flesh: but it is our privilege to contemplate them in the light of the evangelical history; and then they are seen to be replete with spiritual truth, and to afford the loftiest and most affecting views of the Redeemer's character and work.

The course of prophecy threw light, for instance, on the *circumstances* of the Messiah's advent. It had been already declared, that He should be a descendant of Abraham in the line of Isaac and Jacob; and that He should spring from the tribe of Judah, before the sceptre should finally depart from it. But now it was further intimated, that He should arise from the royal house of David, when in a state of lowliness and depression,—when only the root of that family seemed to remain, and the lofty branches which had once adorned it had all been cut down and had perished.* It was declared, that the Messiah should be born in Bethlehem Ephratah, so that this town, though small and insignificant in itself, should be distinguished as the place where He, whose goings

* Isaiah xi. 1; see also 2 Samuel vii. 18, 19.

forth had been from everlasting, should come into our world, arrayed in the humble form of humanity.* It was expressly promised, that the Messiah should appear while the second temple was yet standing, and that He should come to that house of His, and there display His unearthly glory.† And it was intimated, that in His case the ordinary process of human generation should be set aside, and that a mysterious interposition of Divine power should cause Him, whose manhood was to be without a stain, to be conceived and born even of a virgin mother.‡

The light of prophecy afforded intimations, also, of *the peculiar dignity of the Messiah's person*. It was implied in every announcement, that He should be a partaker of our nature; and it was distinctly declared, that He should come into our world in all the lowliness of infancy, and grow up without any external glory to attract and impress the careless and worldly mind. But under the veil of His humanity there was to be the moral glory of Divine perfections. He was to be the Mighty God,—the Eternal One,—the Son manifested among men; and the government which He should exercise was to be uninterrupted and universal. Among the declarations of the prophet Isaiah, we find the remarkable words,—“Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon His shoulder: and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to estab-

* Micah v. 2.

† Haggai ii. 3—9.

‡ Isaiah vii. 14.

lish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever.”* In the second Psalm, the future Restorer is spoken of as THE SON, entitled to the homage and trust of every human mind. He was to be, indeed, rejected and despised; His government was to be set at nought, and the united efforts of His people and of the Gentiles were to be put forth to prevent His exaltation: but He was to be enthroned, at length, as the Head of His church, and the Sovereign of the world; while the solemn attestation of His personal dignity as the Son, should evince Him to be the proper object of religious confidence, submission, and love. Similar views of the inherent glory of the Redeemer’s person are given in the forty-fifth Psalm. In Him the Divine nature was to be mysteriously united with the subordinate and dependent nature of man; and thus He was to sit upon an everlasting throne, and to sway a sceptre of perfect righteousness and truth. “Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: the sceptre of Thy kingdom is a right sceptre. Thou lovest righteousness, and hatest wickedness: therefore God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows.”† In the one hundred and tenth Psalm, the inspired poet raises our minds to the contemplation of the Redeemer, when, having accomplished the work of atonement, He should be seated at the right hand of the Eternal Father, and invested with the dignity of an everlasting priesthood. “The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit Thou at My right hand, until I make Thine enemies Thy

* Isaiah ix. 6, 7. See also, in relation to the absence of *outward* grandeur in the appearance of the Messiah, Isaiah liii. 2.

† Psalm xlv. 6, 7. Compare Hebrews i. 7—9.

footstool." * This language is, in every point of view, remarkable and impressive; and it has peculiar claims on our regard, because the Lord Jesus Christ Himself urged it on the attention of the Pharisees of His own day.† David, raised by the providence of God to the throne of Israel, and favoured with the gift of prophetic song, had long dwelt upon it as the choicest promise which had been made to him, and the greatest distinction which could be conferred on his house, that from his family there should spring the Redeemer and Sovereign of mankind. And yet, guided by the Holy Spirit, this illustrious monarch recognised the coming Deliverer as his own Lord. Thus did he, in effect, proclaim His higher nature; while he rejoiced to set forth the grandeur of His mediatorial reign, and His ultimate triumph over every hostile power. In various other passages of the Old Testament,‡ the Divine nature of the Messiah was intimated with a greater or less degree of clearness; but He was also spoken of as appearing among us in the lowly form of our humanity, sympathising with us in our weakness and sorrows, and Himself a sufferer and a rejected one. Here was the great peculiarity of the prophetic announcements relative to the Messiah's person. The hope of the pious was directed to a manifestation of God Himself in our world; but that manifestation was not to be majestic and overpowering, causing all who had perversely resisted the Divine government to shrink back with dismay, and

* Psalm ex. 1. See also verses 2—4.

† Matthew xxii. 41—45; Luke xx. 41—44.

‡ Job xix. 23—27; Isaiah xl. 3—5, 9—11; Jeremiah xxiii. 5, 6; Daniel vii. 9, 10, 13, 14; Micah v. 2—4; Zechariah xiii. 7; Malachi iii. 1.

inspiring fear even into the breasts of the humble and devout;—it was to be a manifestation of God in outward lowliness, and in tender and condescending grace. A Divine Person was to appear among us, divested of all external splendour, and manifesting His inherent dignity only by His works of power, and the unearthly purity and goodness which should adorn His character and pervade His deportment.

The intimations of prophecy had respect, further, to *the peculiar character of the Redeemer's ministry* as the great Teacher of mankind. That ministry was to be distinguished by its *authority*. He was to issue laws which should bind the consciences of men, and to which even distant nations should bow with lowly reverence.* That ministry was to pour a flood of *light* on all the subjects which most intimately affect the welfare of our race;—it was to exhibit religious truth in its simplicity and grandeur, that all nations might behold it, and be led by it to the paths of peace and holiness.† The ministry of the great Restorer was to be distinguished, further, by its *tenderness* and *condescension*, and by the clear and attractive manner in which it should lay open to the contrite sinner the way of *reconciliation* and *peace*. He was to utter words of comfort and joy to the troubled spirit,—to announce to the captives, languishing in a region of darkness and sorrow, that they might even now come forth, freed from the distressing consciousness of guilt, and from the anticipation of future wrath, and released from the galling fetters of sinful passions. Numerous are the passages in which Isaiah gives this

* Deuteronomy xviii. 18, 19; Isaiah lxii. 4.

† Isaiah xi. 2; xlvi. 1; xlix. 6.

view of the Redeemer's ministry: but there is one which is peculiarly copious and beautiful, and which acquires an additional interest from the fact, that our Lord Himself adduced it as fulfilled in His own teaching. "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon Me; because the LORD hath anointed Me to preach good tidings unto the meek; He hath sent Me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; to proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn; to appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, that He might be glorified." *

But the Messiah was represented, also, under another character. He was *to suffer for the iniquities of men*,—to offer up Himself as *a propitiatory sacrifice*, and then, having risen from the dead, to enter upon the discharge of His *priestly office* in heaven. Throughout the prophetic Scriptures it was declared, that He should be treated with utter contempt and scorn by those who ought to have acknowledged His claims, and whose position in the visible church should give them extensive power and influence. He was to be "the stone set at nought by the builders," and yet constituted, by the signal interposition of Jehovah, "the head of the corner." † But, in addition to this general intimation,

* Isaiah lxi. 1—3. See also xlvi. 2, 3; xlix. 9; Luke iv. 16—21.

† Psalm cxviii. 22, 23. Compare Matthew xxi. 33—44; Luke xx. 17, 18; 1 Peter ii. 4.

that the Messiah would be rejected by the rulers of the Jewish church, we find His sufferings referred to with great minuteness, and expressly connected with His work of atonement. Not only was He to be "despised and rejected of men;"—He was to be "smitten of God," oppressed in spirit with a hidden sorrow, appointed by the justice of the Eternal Father. He was to take the place of the guilty, and sustain the weight of the world's iniquities; and thus He was to feel an anguish, deep, peculiar, and intense, beyond the conception of the human mind. "Surely He hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem Him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the **Lord** hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all."* But, while enduring this unutterable anguish, and all the outward indignities which should be heaped upon Him by His malignant enemies, the Messiah was to be a meek and unmurmuring victim. "He was oppressed, and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth: He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He openeth not His mouth."† Dark and fearful as the scenes of the Redeemer's ignominy and sorrow were to be, yet were the purposes of Divine wisdom, and holiness, and love, to be accomplished in them; and then, He was to rise to a high and glorious life, to dispense to His believing people the richest blessings of salvation, and to enjoy a

* Isaiah liii. 4—6.

† Isaiah liii. 7.

holy satisfaction in witnessing the results of His agony and death. "Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise Him; He hath put Him to grief: when Thou shalt make His soul an offering for sin, He shall see His seed, He shall prolong His days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in His hand. He shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied: by His knowledge shall My righteous servant justify many; for He shall bear their iniquities."*

The remarkable passage of Isaiah, on which we have now dwelt, sets forth, in the clearest manner, the vicarious and propitiatory character of the Messiah's sufferings, while it shadows forth some of the minute circumstances which were to attend the awful tragedy of His death. The same general views are presented, though with greater brevity, in other portions of the prophetic record. Daniel declares,—"And after three-score and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for Himself."† And among the predictions of Zechariah we read,—"Awake, O sword, against My Shepherd, and against the Man that is My Fellow, saith the LORD of Hosts: smite the Shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered: and I will turn Mine hand upon the little ones."‡ This passage derives a peculiar importance from the circumstance, that it was referred to by our Lord Himself, as about to receive its accomplishment when He was entering on the scenes of His deepest humiliation. Its language is remarkable, and full of deep spiritual meaning. It brings before our view One who should be the Shepherd of His people, under whose protecting care and love they should together seek shelter, but

* Isaiah liii. 10, 11. † Daniel ix. 26. ‡ Zechariah xiii. 7.

who should be pierced by the sword of Jehovah, and whose timid flock should then be scattered. It announces the mysterious dignity of Him who was thus to suffer and to die. He was to be truly man, that He might be capable of death; but He was also to possess a nature most intimately allied to the Eternal Father, and one with Him in the essential perfections of Deity. References to the Messiah's death, and to the salvation which through it should be vouchsafed to His believing people, are combined with other prophetic announcements relative to His glorious character and His benignant reign. Thus, in the prophecies of Zechariah, we are called to contemplate the King of Zion coming to that sacred hill, amidst the acclamations of surrounding multitudes; we are instructed to think of Him as "just, and having salvation,"—as "lowly," and eminently pacific in His character and administration; but then we are led onward to the scenes of His humiliation, and the offering of His perfect sacrifice. "As for thee, also, by the blood of thy covenant, I have sent forth thy prisoners out of the pit wherein is no water."* Who can doubt that in these words there was a prophetic reference to the fact, that within a few short days after the coming of the Redeemer to the hill of Zion, that great and effectual atonement should be completed, through which the covenant of grace should be established, and salvation be brought to the fainting spirit, oppressed with the consciousness of its guilt, and shut out from all human hope of deliverance?

The Messiah, too, was to be "a *Priest* upon His throne."† Having offered up Himself as a propitiatory

* Zechariah ix. 9—11.

† Zechariah vi. 12, 13.

sacrifice, He was to "make intercession for the transgressors,"* and bestow His effectual blessing on all who should come unto God through Him. The typical services of the Mosaic economy directed the faith and hope of men to a great High Priest, who should have access to the very throne of God, and sprinkle there the blood of atonement: and the intimations of prophecy confirmed this hope, while they set forth the peculiar and exclusive character of that priesthood with which the Redeemer should be invested. The brief declaration of the one hundred and tenth Psalm on this subject, abounds with instruction:—"The LORD hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a Priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek."† The august Person who is here addressed, had already been presented to the view of our faith, as enthroned at the right hand of the Eternal Father; as sending forth from Zion the word of His power and grace; as ruling in the midst of His enemies, so as to confound their designs, and bring them ultimately to acknowledge His supreme dominion; and as encircled with a devoted and holy people, who should esteem it their highest privilege and honour to engage in His service, and show forth His glory. But, to heighten our conceptions of His dignity, and to encourage our faith in Him, the psalmist leads us to contemplate Him as invested, in the realms of glory, with an everlasting priesthood. To that priesthood He had been appointed by the solemn and irrevocable oath of the Father; for this arrangement was essential to the whole economy of redemption, and was present to the mind of God before the foundation of the world. And the

* Isaiah liii. 12.

† Psalm ex. 4.

priesthood of the Messiah was to be *exclusive* and *unique*. It was not to descend to Him through a long line of human progenitors, nor to pass from Him to any other: it was to be, from first to last, His own,—a priesthood such as no other could ever exercise, and conveying the richest blessings to every devout and believing mind.

The light of prophecy disclosed, also, the peculiar features of the Messiah's *administration*, as *the Sovereign of His people and the world*. He was to be emphatically “the Prince of Peace.”* He was to send forth to the nations generally His message of grace and salvation, to lead them to the enjoyment of peace with God, and to impart to every troubled spirit inward tranquillity and repose.† He was to gather round Himself a people, whose spirit and temper should be eminently *pacific*; who, while they should regard sin, in all its forms, with aversion and displeasure, and manifest a holy firmness in resisting its assaults, should yet be meek, and condescending, and forgiving. His victories were to be those of truth and grace. His servants were to go forth to their conflicts, not clad in the armour, nor brandishing the weapons, of earthly warfare, but in “the beauty of holiness;” adorned with the lovely graces which His Spirit should impart, unfolding to the view of men His own sacred truth, and relying for success on the power of His unseen but almighty hand.‡ The progress of His Gospel, and the extension of His spiritual reign, were to diffuse a love of peace among the nations, until, at length, the clash of arms should be heard no more.§ But the Messiah's administration was to be distinguished,

* Isaiah ix. 6.

† Zechariah ix. 10.

‡ Psalm cx. 3.

§ Isaiah ii. 4; xi. 6—9; Zechariah ix. 10; Micah iv. 3, 4.

also, by its perfect *rectitude*.* Every act of His government was to illustrate the unsullied purity of His character; and all His decisions and awards were to be those of truth and equity. His reign was to be eminently *gracious* and *benignant* to the *humble* and *confiding* spirit. He was to be the “Shepherd” of His people; providing for all their wants, sheltering them in danger, sympathising with the feeble and sorrowful among them, and identifying their interests with His own.† Under His protection and rule, His people were to be secure and happy.‡ Every act of His providential administration, however perplexing to human thought, was to have a favourable bearing on their welfare; and the whole economy of grace was to be directed to their maturity in holiness, and their perfect preparation for the joys of heaven. But His reign was to be one of *terror* to the *perverse* and *rebellious* among men.§ The rejection of His authority and grace would call forth in His mind a holy displeasure, and, if persisted in until the period of longsuffering should have expired, would involve men, at last, in hopeless and irretrievable ruin.

In this rapid survey of the Messiah’s administration, as it was set forth in the announcements of prophecy, and in the view which we have taken of His sacrifice and priesthood, we have necessarily had occasion to refer to the *blessings* which He was to bestow on all who should come to Him, and bow to His gracious sceptre. Beautifully did the successive revelations of the Divine plans illustrate and confirm the promise made to the

* Isaiah xi. 4; Psalm xlvi. 6, 7; Jeremiah xxiii. 5; xxxiii. 15.

† Isaiah xl. 11. ‡ Isaiah xxxii. 1, 2; Psalm ii. 12, last clause.

§ Psalm ii. 9—12; cx. 2; Isaiah xi. 4.

father of the faithful:—"In thy Seed shall all the nations of the earth BE BLESSED." Through the Restorer, despised and rejected by the great ones of the earth, and the rulers of the Jewish church, but exalted by the almighty hand of God to universal sovereignty and an everlasting priesthood, the light of life was to be poured upon this dark and wretched world. The blessings which He should confer were to be emphatically *spiritual* blessings, and thus to meet the hidden wants of the human mind. We cannot read the impressive and glowing predictions of Isaiah, without perceiving that the Deliverer, to whom the hope of the thoughtful and devout had been so long directed, was to bless men, not by raising them to wealth and outward dignity, nor by securing them from the ills of sickness and bereavement, nor by warding off every disappointment that might darken their earthly prospects and depress their energies; but by bringing them to God, to enjoy His friendship, to walk habitually in the light of His countenance, and to consecrate to Him the warmth of their affections, and the vigour of their powers. The Messiah was to "bind up the broken heart," to lead forth the prisoners from their state of spiritual captivity, to clothe the mourners in the garments of praise,* and to put the new song into their lips,—"O LORD, I will praise Thee: though Thou wast angry with me, Thine anger is turned away, and Thou comfortedst me. Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and not be afraid: for the Lord JEHOVAH is my strength and my song; He also is become my salvation."† After ages of darkness and sorrow, the Messiah was to arise as "the Sun of Righteous-

* Isaiah lxi. 1—3.

† Isaiah xii. 1, 2.

ness," to shed a healing and salutary light on all who should welcome His beams and turn away with lowly penitence from every forbidden path.*

Such were the discoveries of the Redeemer's person, and character, and offices, and work, which were made to mankind during the long years of the Mosaic economy. While the tabernacle or the temple of God presented to the devout inquirer its beautiful symbols, awakening in many minds an earnest desire to see the day of Christ, the declarations of "holy men," who "spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost,"† exhibited the great DELIVERER to human faith and hope, as mysteriously uniting in Himself the Divine and human natures; as a Prophet of unrivalled wisdom, authority, and grace; as the Substitute of the guilty race of men, and the Bearer of the world's iniquities; as a Priest, who should present on our behalf His own efficacious sacrifice; and as a Sovereign, who should be enthroned at the right hand of the Eternal Father, whose reign should be eminently pacific and benign, who should confer on all His people the richest spiritual blessings, and before whom, at last, every hostile power should fall in utter confusion and dismay.

* Malachi iv. 2.

† 2 Peter i. 21.



PART II.

THE EVANGELICAL HISTORY OF THE LIFE,
MINISTRY, DEATH, AND RESURRECTION,
OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST.



CHAPTER I.

THE STATE OF JUDEA, AND OF THE WORLD, AT THE TIME OF THE REDEEMER'S ADVENT.

AGES had rolled away, and successive changes had passed over human affairs, when, at length, the time drew near for the appearance of Him to whom the hopes of the patriarchs, and the aspirations of the pious Israelites, had been directed. Empires had risen and fallen: conquerors, whose names spread terror and dismay, had pursued their career of military glory, and then had passed from the scene of human action; and the dominion which they had sought to consolidate, had been subverted by others. The palaces of Assyria and Babylon had been successively laid in ruins; and the vast empire of Persia had yielded to the victorious arms of the impetuous Macedonian. The kingdoms which arose upon his removal from earth, had long since declined in power. The political importance of Greece had passed away, though the influence of her literature and arts was still diffused among the nations. Rome had now attained to almost universal dominion; the east and west bowed to her resistless power; her name was revered from the Euphrates to the shores of Britain; and countries which had long aspired to independence and sovereignty, received their governors from her, while the kings who stood allied to her acknowledged

their dependence, and sought protection from her arms. The conflicts of party, which distinguished the republic, had prepared the way for the establishment of the imperial rule; and the mild Augustus now presided over an empire which could defy every hostile power, and could only be impaired by luxury and injustice within.

The Holy Land, where the chosen people of God had been settled by the interposition of His almighty arm, had experienced many vicissitudes. The history of the Hebrew nation presented, in every period, a remarkable connection between obedience to the Divine will and outward prosperity, on the one hand,—and between unfaithfulness to God and visitations of suffering and calamity, on the other. Through successive generations God Himself reigned over His people, protecting them when they relied on His promises and bowed to His authority, and permitting them to fall a prey to their enemies, and to be humbled in the sight of the world, when they renounced their allegiance to Him, and abandoned themselves to idolatry. The administration of judges, whom God from time to time raised up, was followed by the establishment of regal power; and the throne of David, the ancestor of the promised Messiah, and the sweet singer of Israel, was rendered illustrious by the special blessing of Jehovah,—though the Hand that exalted and sustained him, chastened him with righteous severity, when he wandered from the path of purity, and stained his hands with the blood of the innocent. But the glory of his reign, and the still higher glory of that of Solomon, when the temple was built in all its grandeur, to invite the thoughtful of every land to come and worship Jehovah, was succeeded by an

injurious division of the tribes of Israel,—a division which led to frequent conflicts and accumulated suffering. The separate kingdoms of Judah and Israel experienced, on numerous occasions, the fearful effects of departing from God and despising His worship; until, at length, the kingdom of the ten tribes was overthrown by the Assyrian power, and Judah only remained, to hold forth to the nations the great truth of Jehovah's universal rule. But Judah, though favoured with many distinguishing proofs of the Divine care, became, at length, awfully corrupt, and was thus abandoned to suffering and desolation. The powerful monarch of Babylon subverted Jerusalem, and laid the temple in ruins; and only a few of the poorest inhabitants were left, to cultivate that land which had once attracted the admiration of surrounding nations. But the purposes of God required the return of the Jews to the land of their fathers; and, in His own way, He brought about their deliverance from the Babylonian captivity, and their re-establishment in the country which He had promised to Abraham, His friend. A second temple was erected, which, though inferior to the first in external magnificence, was to be rendered far more glorious by the appearance of Him who should be "the Desire of all nations," and from whose sacred lips the message of peace and life should be heard within it.* Amidst the changes which affected the mighty kingdoms around it, the little state of Judaea experienced many fluctuations; but it was preserved by the hand of God, to be the scene of the most momentous displays of His holiness and love. Herod now reigned as the king of the Jews, but

* Haggai ii. 3, 7—9.

in alliance with the Roman power, and paying homage to Augustus, whose friendship he courted, and on whose favourable opinion he was, to a great extent, dependent. The character of Herod was dark and sanguinary: he shrank from no deeds of blood which his suspicious temper suggested, or which seemed necessary to secure to him the undisputed possession of the throne. But while he was blindly following the impulses of his passions, and consigning to death even some of his nearest relatives, the fulness of time arrived, and the Prince of peace, the Hope and Saviour of the world, was born, a lowly infant, in the town of Bethlehem.*

The *religious* condition of *the Jewish people*, at the time of the Redeemer's advent, presents several features which deserve our attention. The temple-services were maintained with great exactness; and as often as the leading festivals returned, multitudes flocked to Jerusalem to observe the institutions of Jehovah, and to commemorate those events in the history of their fathers in which His hand had been so signally displayed. Synagogues were established in almost every place, where the law and the prophets were read, and addresses illustrative of their meaning were delivered. Thus did the Jewish nation still acknowledge and proclaim the exclusive Godhead of Jehovah, and honour the written revelation which had been entrusted to their care. But large masses of that people had no suitable conception of the spiritual nature of the worship which God requires, and which must be blended with every external service, to render it acceptable to Him; and many were altogether devoted to the world in their thoughts and affections.

* Matthew ii. 1.

There was, indeed, a pious remnant among them, who worshipped the Most High in spirit and in truth, and looked forward with earnest hope to the manifestation of the Messiah, and the unfolding of the Divine purposes of grace and love. It is refreshing, as we read the narratives of the evangelists, to meet with individuals like Zacharias and Elisabeth, who were "righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless;"*—like Simeon, "a just and devout man," who habitually "waited for the Consolation of Israel," and enjoyed intimate communion with God;†—like Mary, the virgin mother of our Lord, whose lofty trust in God, and gratitude for the signal mercy vouchsafed to her, shine forth so brightly on the sacred page;—and like Joseph, upright, considerate, and gentle,‡ who so gladly followed the intimations of the Divine will, and accepted the honour of watching over the infancy and childhood of Him who was to be the Restorer of the world. These are but specimens of a class of persons, at that time found among the Jews, who loved to wait upon God in His temple, and with earnest desire and hope looked for the promised redemption.§

But while the narratives of the New Testament present to us some attractive examples of humble piety among the race of Israel, at the time of the Redeemer's advent, they show us, but too clearly, that the hopes of the nation generally were directed, not to a spiritual deliverer, but to a powerful and triumphant prince, who should raise them from their political depression, and constitute Jerusalem the seat of a new and illustrious

* Luke i. 6. † Luke ii. 25, 26. ‡ Matthew i. 19. § Luke ii. 38.

empire. They dwelt with interest on the promises made to Abraham, and the glowing predictions of the inspired writers, relative to the Messiah's reign ; and not understanding the deep spiritual import of the ancient prophecies, they fondly hoped, that when the great Restorer should appear, He would raise His people Israel to the highest dignity, and reign in outward splendour over the nations. Eagerly did many of the Jews anticipate the establishment of " the kingdom of God ;" identifying that kingdom with the recovery of their national greatness, and the submission of men of every land to the usages and rites by which they, as a people, had been distinguished. Thus were they utterly indisposed to welcome Him who appeared in lowliness and poverty as the Hope of Israel, and who proclaimed the reign of God in the human *heart*,—the dominion of humble, holy love, breathed into the soul by God Himself, and sustained by His own powerful influence.

Among the religious *sects* which were prominent among the Jews when the Messiah appeared, that of the Pharisees held the most distinguished place. The members of this sect enjoyed the esteem of the people generally, and were by many regarded even with veneration, on account of their external sanctity, and their exact observance of all the rites of the Mosaic law. These they studied with minute care ; and instead of entering into the spiritual meaning of many of the precepts and promises of the ancient revelation, they laid the chief stress on outward things, and even added to the yoke which had been laid upon their fathers. They gloried, as indeed did all the Jews, in their relation to Abraham, and in the badge of that covenant

which God had established with their race. But they were, for the most part, destitute of earnest religious feeling, and their acts of worship were rendered valueless by the absence of a profound regard to God, and an intense desire to enjoy His friendship, and to be conformed to His purity and goodness. In too many instances, they were chargeable with gross hypocrisy : for while they adhered with scrupulous exactness to the minutest ceremonial injunctions, they evaded the great moral precepts of the law, and committed acts of injustice and oppression. Their "righteousness" was thus essentially defective, and the hopes which they built upon it were utterly fallacious.* They had yet to learn that poverty of spirit is the first characteristic of the truly pious, and that the utter renunciation of self-dependence must precede the attainment of inward peace and moral loveliness. They had yet to learn that the true attitude of the human spirit in its approaches to the Most High, is that of lowly and penitent confession, and that even the joys of pardon, and the sacred hopes which rise within the breast of the restored sinner, will be combined with a deep consciousness of entire and constant dependence on the grace of God.

The sect of the Sadducees included many persons of wealth and influence, but did not enjoy that high reputation among the people in which the Pharisees were held. The principles of this sect could not fail to be repulsive to every mind distinguished by moral earnestness, and a vivid consciousness of religious need. While the authority of Moses, as a divinely commissioned teacher and legislator, was respected and maintained,

* Matthew v. 20.

several of the most momentous truths implied in his writings, and essential to religion under every dispensation, were called in question or denied. The conscious existence of the human spirit in a future state, and the resurrection of the body, were treated as erroneous and visionary doctrines ;* nor did the members of this sect admit the existence of angels, or contemplate this world as a scene of interest and instruction to other orders of rational beings.† Communion with God, and a realising conviction of His special providential care, were altogether alien from their habits of thought and feeling ; and their religion was confined to the acknowledgment of Jehovah as the one God,—the observance of the law, understood after their own way,—and the maintenance of integrity and faithfulness in their intercourse with their fellow-men.

There was another sect found at this time among the Jews, though not so prominent as either of those which we have just considered. The members of it were known as the Essenes ; and their principles involved a strange mixture of truth and error,—of that which is amiable and attractive in the human character, with that which is injurious and repulsive. They revered the Scriptures, but interpreted them in an allegorical manner ; they held firmly the doctrine of the immortality of the soul, observed the holy Sabbath with the greatest strictness, and assigned the highest importance to universal rectitude and fidelity ; but they were in bondage to several ascetic observances,—they would only partake of food prepared within their own sect,—and most of them rejected marriage as inconsistent with the lofty purity to which they aspired. Though they shrank from the contamination

* Matthew xxii. 23—33.

† Acts xxiii. 8.

of great cities, they did not wholly separate themselves from the world ; they engaged in agriculture and the arts of peace, but only to furnish themselves with the means of subsistence, and to enable them to contribute to the necessities of others ; and they applied themselves to the study and practice of medicine. They honoured the temple, and sent gifts to it ; but did not themselves frequent its services, either through certain peculiar views which they held, relative to the sacrifices of the Mosaic law, or because they regarded it as profaned by the vices of some who were employed in its duties. Many members of this sect were doubtless men of sincere and earnest religious feeling ; but they were misled by the mystical and ascetic bent of their spirits, and failed to present the lovely spectacle of that humble piety which embraces the revelation of God in its simplicity and fulness, observes with reverence and love all His requirements, and yet does not add to the restraints of His law, nor aspire to peculiar merit by renouncing that which He allows and sanctions.

It was an important feature of the period in which the Lord Jesus appeared in our world, that the Jewish people were widely diffused among the nations, and, under the tolerant government of Rome, had established a synagogue in most of the cities of that vast empire, where the law and the prophets were read every Sabbath-day. The great truths of the revelation confided to them were thus held forth, at least to some extent, to the view of mankind. Amidst the pomp and splendour of pagan worship, the chosen people unostentatiously maintained the doctrine that Jehovah is the only true God,—exhibited the great precepts of His law,—and

made prominent the hope of an illustrious Restorer, in whom all the nations of the earth should be blessed. Their synagogues were thrown open to Gentile worshippers ; and some, in every land, who had not submitted to circumcision, nor taken upon themselves the observance of the ritual law, were yet accustomed to assemble with them, to avow their faith in the living God, and to receive instruction from His holy word. Thus were they prepared to listen to the message of mercy, which the ambassadors of the crucified but risen Saviour were, at length, commissioned to address to them ; and many of this class were gathered into the earliest Christian churches, and were found among the most devoted and steadfast professors of the name of Jesus.*

The condition of *the heathen world*, at the time of the Redeemer's advent, exhibited many points of deep interest. It was an age of refinement, of literary culture, and of great advancement in the arts which embellish life. But it was an age, also, of widely-spread corruption, of unblushing sensuality, and of cruel oppression. The state of morals, among the most polished nations, must appear utterly revolting to every mind accustomed to estimate character on the principles of the Gospel. It is impossible to read the polite literature of Rome, without a melancholy impression, that the tone of public feeling, in relation to sensual indulgences, was fearfully depraved and low : and we cannot but perceive, how just and appropriate are the words of the inspired apostle, that the heathen of his day "had given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness."† There was an utter insensibility to

* *Acts passim.*

† *Ephesians iv. 19.*

human suffering, and, in many cases, an eager appetite for spectacles of blood. Who can think of the shows of gladiators, and the vast concourse of educated persons, and even of Roman ladies, that attended them, without shuddering at the callousness of heart which distinguished the people of that age, even in the very centre of civilisation, the metropolis of the world!

The systems of religion which then prevailed, instead of correcting and restraining the vicious tendencies of our nature, served rather to excite and strengthen them, and especially to foster the love of sensual gratification. The supposed deities whom the mass of the people worshipped, were the creatures of an impure imagination and a depraved heart. Their character, generally speaking, combined the elements of ambition, jealousy, revenge, and lust; and few of them exhibited any redeeming quality. The popular mythology was thus calculated to lower the tone of moral feeling, by setting before the view of the masses personifications of all that is impure and malignant, as the objects of adoration and trust. Some of the festivals, also, which the religions of paganism enjoined, terminated in general licentiousness; and thus the sanction of that power, which ought to control the appetites of man, and to frown upon every departure from purity, was given to indulgences to which, alas! his fallen nature is too prone, and which often exert an en chaining and fascinating influence over their votaries, until the terrible retribution comes on of exhaustion and premature decay!

The popular mythology, indeed, had long ceased to retain its hold on the convictions of the more intellectual and cultivated men of Greece and Rome. But this

affected not the condition of the mass of the people. Even if the speculations of philosophy had been correct and valuable in themselves, they would have contributed very little to scatter the darkness in which mankind generally were involved. In few instances were they carried beyond the select circle. The philosophers of that day put forth no efforts to communicate to the multitude the sentiments which they had themselves embraced. It was not until Christianity appeared, that the world beheld the spectacle of men who held great religious truths with thoughtful earnestness, and felt the power of them in their own hearts, going forth amidst scorn, and obloquy, and persecution, to press these truths on the attention of all men, and to leaven with them the entire mass of mankind. So far, indeed, were the sages of Greece and Rome from attempting to correct and banish the popular errors, that they themselves conformed to the superstitious practices which they secretly regarded with contempt.

But the speculations of philosophy were, for the most part, vain and misleading; and the wisest among the heathen had only imperfect and fluctuating apprehensions of truth. The Epicurean system involved great and fearful errors, and was utterly unsuited to meet the cravings of a thoughtful and earnest mind, that felt its need of something higher and more satisfying than the pleasures of earth. It acknowledged the existence of deities, but ascribed to them the human form as the noblest with which man is acquainted, and represented them as free from all care and solicitude about the world which we inhabit. They sat on high in calm and tranquil dignity, and left the course of human affairs to

proceed, without interposing to assert the supremacy of rectitude, or to succour individual men who sought their protection and blessing. The Stoical philosophy was essentially pantheistic. It deified the universe itself, and regarded all events as the result of necessary causes operating from eternity. The history of the world thus presented only a succession of periodical changes; and the life of each individual became an aimless sport in the necessary revolutions. This philosophy sanctioned the popular religion, but interpreted it in an allegorical manner, and thus sought to bring it into harmony with pantheistic principles. A cold indifference to the events of life was elevated to the rank of an important virtue; and the human spirit, formed to seek communion with its Father in heaven, and to find repose and joy in the assurance of His care and love, was taught to resign itself to its destiny, whatever it might be, as required by the periodical changes of the universe. The Platonic philosophy, in its several modifications, placed before the view of men an intelligent Being, distinct from the universe which He had arranged. But this Supreme Spirit was almost unapproachable by man. It required an absorption of the mind from all worldly and sensible objects, to rise to communion with Him. Created spirits, possessed of powers and resources far above those of man, were thought to occupy the space that separated the primal essence from the human mind, fettered by its union with matter, and having to strive incessantly to prepare itself for a nobler and purer state of existence. These spirits were regarded as proper objects of religious homage; and thus even the Platonic philosophy sanctioned the polytheism of the multitude. It elevated,

indeed, the thoughts and feelings of many minds, formed to sympathise with that which is noble and refined; but it was utterly powerless to correct the evils of the world, or lead man to the true knowledge of God.

Such was the state of the western world, in respect of religious knowledge and worship, at the time of the Redeemer's advent. The schools of philosophy established in Greece and Rome, and the disciples of which were found in every direction, occupied themselves with speculations relative to the Divine nature,—the powers that govern this world,—and the destiny of the human spirit. But while some rays of light—derived, perhaps, from the testimony which the ancient people of God bore, in almost every land, to the existence of an Almighty Creator and Ruler of the universe—occasionally flashed on many thoughtful minds; that light, if it did not lead them to mingle in the worship of the synagogue, remained partial and feeble, and was obscured by errors which greatly interfered with its practical effect. The spirit of the ancient philosophy was utterly at variance with the humility, and childlike dependence on the Most High, which distinguish the people of Christ. It did not bring man near to God; it did not teach him to seek communion with the Eternal One in all the intercourse and engagements of life; it did not set forth His friendship as the joy and solace of the human spirit; and it did not affirm the momentous truth, that all the moral excellence of man is derived from the influence of God Himself upon the soul, and can only be maintained by walking humbly with Him. It left the fearful evils of the world to accumulate and gather strength; and abandoned the masses to the dominion of superstition, or to a cold

and careless scepticism. But when the utmost efforts of philosophy had failed,—when, “in the wisdom of God, the world by wisdom knew not God,”*—it pleased Him that from the seed of Abraham the promised Deliverer should arise, to shed a clear and steady light on His perfections and government, and to confer spiritual blessings on all the nations of the earth. From the obscurity of Bethlehem and Nazareth, that illustrious Teacher came forth, “whose goings forth had been from of old, even from everlasting;”† and to whose mind the mysterious depths of the Divine nature, and the realities of the invisible world, were known and familiar. His brief and comprehensive sayings poured a flood of light on subjects which the profoundest minds of the heathen world had been unable to explain. But He appeared as “the Man of sorrows;” and it was not until He had passed through the anguish of the garden and the cross, and risen again to confirm the faith of all His followers, that the message of peace and salvation through His name, could be sent forth to the whole family of man.‡ But now that message is to be addressed to every human mind; and the humblest of our race—those who have to toil without intermission for “the bread that perisheth,” and whom the ancient philosophy would have neglected or despised—may rise, through Christ, to the loftiest wisdom; and the sorrowful spirit, torn with the anguish of conscious guilt, or weighed down by the afflictions and bereavements of life, may find in Christ an unfailing refuge, and be cheered by the communication of heavenly comfort and strength.

* 1 Corinthians i. 21.

† Micah v. 2.

‡ Luke xxiv. 46, 47.

CHAPTER II.

THE BIRTH OF THE REDEEMER.—HIS EARLY LIFE ON EARTH.

It was the plan of infinite wisdom, that the appearance of the Messiah should be immediately preceded by that of a distinguished prophet, who should act as His harbinger, and direct to Him the faith and hope of men. This arrangement was eminently calculated to do honour to the Redeemer. It served to awaken the expectation of every thoughtful mind, and to mark the transcendent dignity of Him whose way was thus to be prepared. In the writings of the prophets, several intimations had been given of this purpose of the Divine mind ;* and, at length, when the time drew near for the great Restorer to come to our world of sin and sorrow, God interposed to raise up the forerunner of His Son, and to distinguish even *his* birth by circumstances which tended to produce a lively impression of the character which he should sustain.

Among the devout Israelites who, in that time of general corruption, waited upon God, and earnestly looked for the promised Deliverer, there were an affectionate husband and wife, far advanced in years, who had never sustained the parental relation. Zacharias and Elisabeth had long walked in the fear of the Lord, and had endeavoured to observe all His precepts ; but they appear to have felt the want of children, and often had

* Isaiah xl. 3 ; Malachi iii. 1 ; iv. 5, 6.

they prayed to the Most High to grant them that blessing, so highly valued among the Hebrew nation. * Zacharias was of priestly descent ; and, as often as his turn came round, he gladly came up to Jerusalem, to perform his duties in the temple of the Lord. While he was engaged in burning incense, a heavenly messenger appeared to him, and declared, that the petition which he had often addressed to God should be answered, and that his wife Elisabeth should bear him a son, who should become a distinguished prophet, and “in the spirit and power of Elijah” should arouse a slumbering nation to behold the long-expected Messiah, and to listen to His words of grace and peace. † Zacharias, astonished at this announcement, adverted to the improbability, according to all human considerations, of its accomplishment ; and then the angel, who had been commissioned to assure him of the gracious purpose of the Most High, confirmed his declaration by a sign, which served to reprove his unbelief, and to convince both him and all around him, that he had really received a message from God. The power of speech was taken from him, until the performance of the Divine engagement ; and thus, when he came forth to the people, from ministering in the temple, “they perceived that he had seen a vision ; for he beckoned unto them, and remained speechless.” ‡ When the period of his ministration expired, Zacharias returned to his house. Soon afterwards Elisabeth conceived, and rejoiced in the goodness of the Most High, which had given her the certain prospect of becoming a mother, and had disclosed to her the exalted service to which her son would be called ; and, at length, her hopes

* Luke i. 5—7, 13. † Luke i. 8—17. ‡ Luke i. 18—22.

were realised, and her son, the joy of her age, and the harbinger of the great Restorer, was brought into the world. The incidents which occurred at the circumcision of the child, are given at length by the sacred historian, and are well deserving of remembrance. It was the wish of many of the friends of the family, that the son of Zacharias should bear his own name ; but Elisabeth interposed, and, faithful to the instructions which had been given to her husband by the heavenly messenger, insisted that he should be called John,—a name expressive of the grace and favour of Jehovah which had been shown to them, and indeed to the people of Israel generally, in the gift of this child.* The subject was referred to the decision of Zacharias ; and he, calling for a writing-table, simply and distinctly wrote, “His name is John.” Immediately his speech was restored to him ; and being “filled with the Holy Ghost,” he gave utterance to a sublime hymn of praise, which, viewed in connexion with the circumstances under which it was delivered, arrested the attention of all around, and induced them to exclaim, “What manner of child shall this be !”† In the hymn in question, Zacharias, like a devout man who had long placed his hope on the coming Messiah, dwelt with absorbing interest on the blessings which He should dispense, and on the goodness of God in the approaching fulfilment of the promise which He had made unto their fathers. The Redeemer to arise in the house of David, was the theme of his loftiest praises ; and the mission of his son was adverted to, only as that which should prepare the way of an infinitely higher Prophet. It was the great Deliverer

* Luke i. 60, compared with verses 13, 14. † Luke i. 62—66.

Himself, who was to shed the light of life upon our dark and sinful world, to rescue us from the power of our spiritual foes, and to enable us to serve God in holiness and righteousness, without any oppressive dread, and under the sweet attraction of filial love. That Deliverer is brought before us, in this inspired hymn, in all the glory of universal dominion and eternal Deity. We are taught to contemplate Him as the Lord,—the Most High ; though, in order to redeem us, He should ally Himself to our nature, and become the offspring of David. “ And his father Zacharias was filled with the Holy Ghost, and prophesied, saying, Blessed be the Lord God of Israel ; for He hath visited and redeemed His people, and hath raised up an horn of salvation for us in the house of His servant David ; as He spake by the mouth of His holy prophets, which have been since the world began : that we should be saved from our enemies, and from the hand of all that hate us ; to perform the mercy promised to our fathers, and to remember His holy covenant ; the oath which He sware to our father Abraham, that He would grant unto us, that we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies might serve Him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before Him, all the days of our life. And thou, child, shalt be called the prophet of the Highest : for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to prepare His ways ; to give knowledge of salvation unto His people by the remission of their sins, through the tender mercy of our God ; whereby the dayspring from on high hath visited us, to give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace.”*

* Luke i. 67—79.

But about three months before the birth of John, a far higher event took place, even the conception of the sinless humanity of our Lord. The family of David, from which the Messiah was to spring, was now in a depressed state ; and among the descendants of that illustrious house, the wisdom of God fixed upon a poor but pious virgin, betrothed to a holy man, who also was of the line of David, to be the mother of Him, for whose coming so lengthened a series of preparations had been made, and in whom all the nations of the earth were to be blessed. Mary, the humble woman on whom this distinction was conferred, resided in the insignificant town of Nazareth in Galilee.* When the angel Gabriel announced to her the gracious purpose of the Most High towards her, and declared the unearthly dignity of the Son whom she should bear, though yet a virgin, through the immediate agency of God,—her faith embraced the promise ; and, trusting her reputation to Him who governs all things, she exclaimed, “Behold the handmaid of the Lord ; be it unto me according to thy word.” The declaration of the heavenly messenger relative to the Offspring of Mary, afforded the loftiest views of His personal dignity and official greatness. He was to be “the Son of God,” though clothed in the lowly form of humanity ;—He was to be free from every stain of moral defilement ;—His name was to be called JESUS, God the Saviour, to intimate at once His Divine glory and the gracious purpose for which He appeared on earth ;—He was to be enthroned over the true Israel of God ;—and His kingdom, unlike the empires of the earth, was never to pass away.†

* Luke i. 26, 27.

† Luke i. 30—38.

Here we may pause, and with adoring reverence contemplate the ways of God. The miraculous conception of our Lord's humanity was necessary to the economy of redemption. The Deliverer of men was to come "in the likeness of sinful flesh;" He was to assume our nature in a state of humiliation and lowness; He was to be a sharer of our weakness, temptations, and sorrows; but He was to be free from every stain, and not to participate in the guilt and corruption of our race. All this was provided for by the wisdom and power of God. The Messiah was emphatically "the Seed of the woman." He alone, of all who have been born into this world, was conceived of woman only, through the immediate power of the Holy Ghost. Thus He stood not in the same relation to Adam in which we stand; and while He came in the utter weakness of infancy, His humanity was free from the least contact of evil, and He ever remained "holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners." It was only a nature thus pure and hallowed that the Eternal Son could assume into a personal union with Himself; and as we dwell on the circumstances which distinguished His coming into the world, we are led with the evangelist to triumph in Him, as "Emmanuel, God with us."*

The first impulse of Joseph, when he perceived the situation of her to whom he had been contracted, was to put her away in the most private manner which the law allowed, since his gentle spirit caused him to shrink from the thought of making her a public example. But while he was reflecting on these things, an angel of

* Matthew i. 22, 23. See also Romans viii. 3; 2 Corinthians v. 21; Hebrews vii. 26—28.

God appeared to him in a dream, to assure him of the innocence of Mary, and unfold to him the purpose of the Most High, that she should become the mother of the long-expected Saviour, whose humanity had been produced within her by the agency of the Holy Ghost. Joseph accepted, with cheerful confidence and gratitude, the charge which Divine wisdom assigned to him; and taking Mary to his own house, he became the reputed father of the adorable Jesus, though his intercourse with Mary, at least until the birth of her distinguished Son, was that only of her protector and friend.*

In the series of prophetic announcements relative to the Messiah, it had been expressly declared, that He should be born in Bethlehem of Judæa; and the providence of God, which can never want means to fulfil the purposes of His infinite wisdom, arranged to accomplish this. Joseph and Mary resided at Nazareth; but an order was issued from Rome that a general census should be made of the inhabitants of the empire, with its dependent states. In obedience to this decree, they proceeded to Bethlehem, the city of David, that their names might be enrolled there, since they were both descended from that illustrious monarch of Israel, though now found in lowly circumstances. Bethlehem was, at that time, filled with visitors; and the humble pair were obliged to put up with the mean accommodation of a stable belonging to an inn.† It was here that the Messiah was born; and He whom angels adored, and at whose bidding universal nature rose into existence, condescended to ally Himself to our race in these circumstances of weakness and humiliation.

* Matthew i. 18—25.

† Luke ii. 1—7.

But the advent of the Redeemer, though thus destitute of worldly splendour, was distinguished by incidents which tended to fix upon Him the attention of every thoughtful and spiritual mind. Even when He thus appeared in the utter weakness of infancy, and in outward lowliness and depression, He was honoured by the arrangements of the Eternal Father. The first of the incidents referred to occurred on the very night of His nativity. Some pious shepherds, who were watching over their flocks in the open field, received from a heavenly messenger the tidings of the Saviour's birth; and to confirm their faith, they were told, that they should find the babe in the city of David, "wrapped in swaddling-clothes, lying in a manger." Cheering and delightful was the announcement which was made by the angel to these members of the house of Israel; and his words have often refreshed the minds of men in succeeding ages, who have felt the burden of their sins, and sighed for deliverance and peace. "Fear not; for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord."* And then, to honour still more the infant Saviour, a multitude of the heavenly host appeared, and chanted the sweet and joyful words, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men."† Long had the angelic hosts contemplated the Divine administration of our world, and marked, with deep and earnest interest, the preparations for the manifestation of the great Restorer; and when, at length, He appeared, —when THE SON condescended to clothe Himself with

* Luke ii. 10, 11.

† Luke ii. 13, 14.

our humanity, and to come into our world, in circumstances of outward humiliation and poverty,— they beheld in this event the first great act of that wondrous scheme of redemption, which was to show forth, throughout eternity, the perfections of the Most High. The shepherds, astonished and grateful, resolved at once to proceed to Bethlehem; and, coming with haste, “they found Mary, and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger. And when they had seen it, they made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this child. And all they that heard it, wondered at those things which were told them by the shepherds. But Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart.”*

The next incident alluded to occurred when Joseph and Mary came up to Jerusalem, to present the infant Jesus, as the first-born, in the temple, and to offer, on behalf of His mother, the required sacrifice, now that the days of her purification were accomplished. Among those who were accustomed to frequent the temple-services, was an aged and holy man, of the name of Simeon, who “waited,” with earnest desire and hope, “for the Consolation of Israel;” and to whom it had been revealed, that he should not die until he had seen the Anointed of Jehovah. The character of Simeon appears to have commanded the respect of all who knew him; for he was faithful in the discharge of all his duties towards men, as well as anxious to maintain a close walk with God.† Largely did he enjoy the inward comfort of piety; and instead of anticipating eternity with dread, he felt that, if he could only behold the

* Luke ii. 15—19.

† Luke ii. 25.

Messiah in the flesh, his last remaining wish as to earth would be gratified, and he could cheerfully depart to his heavenly home. This eminent servant of God came up to the temple, under the special impulse of the Holy Spirit, at the very time that Joseph and Mary appeared there with the infant Jesus; and, taking the child in his arms, he blessed God, and said, “Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace, according to Thy word: for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation, which Thou hast prepared before the face of all people; a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of Thy people Israel.”* Then, turning to the honoured Mary, who with Joseph had listened to his thanksgiving with silent and grateful admiration, he added the emphatic words, “Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel; and for a sign which shall be spoken against, (yea, a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also,) that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed.”† Deep and momentous were the truths which this address of the holy Simeon embraced. He recognised the Infant before him, as the Giver of salvation,—the Hope of Israel,—the Light of the world,—the Refuge of the sorrowful and fainting spirit. But he declared, also, that in His career all was not to be bright and glorious, and free from offence to the world. There was to be that in Him which should offend the pride of many a lofty spirit; and His name, though unspeakably precious to all the humble and devout, was to become to many the object of dislike and scorn. Amidst the deep emotions of gratitude which filled the breast of Mary, now that she presented in the

* Luke ii. 29—32.

† Luke ii. 34, 35.

temple her distinguished Infant, whom she well knew to be the promised Messiah, and the Saviour of the world, another feeling was called forth by the prophetic address of the venerable Simeon. He informed her, that to her there was approaching, in relation to this her Son, an hour of deepest sorrow. "A sword" was to "pierce through her soul," when she should behold Him despised, rejected, crucified. She was to stand at the foot of the cross, and see Him in whom she now rejoiced, extended there in deepest anguish. But the Redeemer, as thus crucified for man, was to become the proper object of confidence and hope; and the reception or rejection of Him was to form the grand test of character, and the condition of eternal happiness or woe. "Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel; and for a sign that shall be spoken against;—*that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed.*" In every age, the truths which relate to the Lord Jesus, and the method of salvation through faith in His blood, have formed the touchstone, to which, in the Divine administration, the characters of men are brought, and through which the real moral state of many hearts is disclosed. If there is prevailing worldliness, or a lofty pride of intellect, or an unwillingness to renounce all dependence on ourselves, the cross of Christ will repel us, and we shall remain guilty, polluted, and undone. But if we are humble, reverent, dutiful worshippers of God, the plan of salvation through the atonement of Jesus will be gratefully embraced; and then will it disclose to our expanding minds its riches of heavenly wisdom. Such were the sentiments uttered by the inspired Simeon, as he devoutly recognised in the infant Jesus

the promised Messiah. His testimony, doubtless, produced a deep impression on many minds; and it was confirmed by that of the pious Anna, a prophetess, who, "coming in that instant, gave thanks likewise unto the Lord, and spake of Him to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem."*

But the wisdom of God provided another testimony to the Messiahship of the Lord Jesus, while yet in the lowliness of infancy. Joseph and Mary had returned from Jerusalem, and had again visited Bethlehem, probably after a short stay at Nazareth. It may be that they were called to Bethlehem by some temporary engagements; or they might have had it in contemplation to make that city the place of their permanent residence. At this juncture, some wise men from the East, who, though Gentiles, appear to have been worshippers of the true God, and to have looked forward with interest to the appearance of the Messiah, came to Jerusalem, and produced a considerable sensation by asking, where they could find the illustrious Child who had been born to be the King of Israel. They explained the reason of their journey, and of their apparently strange inquiry, to be, that they had seen a peculiar meteor, which they understood to betoken this great event; and as they earnestly desired to honour the distinguished Sovereign, and enjoy the blessings of His reign, they had come to do homage to Him, though yet an infant. The jealous temper of Herod was roused by this occurrence; and, calling together the chief priests and scribes, he inquired of them, where, according to the declarations of the prophets, the Messiah should be born. The reply of the

* Luke ii. 38.

council was simple and distinct. They pointed Herod to Bethlehem; and referred him to the well-known passage of Micah :—“But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall He come forth unto me, that is to be Ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting.” Having received this answer, Herod sought a private interview with the wise men, in which he inquired particularly at what time they first perceived the meteor which led them to Jerusalem, and sent them forward to Bethlehem, to do homage to the young child, instructing them to return to him, and to furnish him with accurate information of their visit, that he also might pay due honour to so illustrious an Infant. The wise men proceeded to Bethlehem, and being guided by the meteor to the very house where Mary and her child were, they gladly prostrated themselves before Him, and, opening their treasures, “presented unto Him gifts, gold, and frankincense, and myrrh.”* Here was a beautiful illustration of the prophetic statement, that the Messiah should be “the Desire of all nations;” and here, too, was an earnest of that homage which the Gentile world should be brought to pay to its Saviour and Lord.

The request which Herod made to the wise men, that they would return and inform him of the success of their inquiries after the infant Messiah, was dictated by his suspicious and malignant temper; and was only preparatory to the adoption of measures, to take away the life of one whom he regarded as a rival to his own dignity and power. A Divine admonition caused them

* Matthew ii. 1—11.

to disobey his order, and return home by another route; and the guardians of the infant Saviour were also directed, by an angel, to hasten with Him to Egypt, that His life might be secure from the cruel attempt of the Jewish king. They obeyed the command; and thus He, in whom all nations were to be blessed, and who was to be the Head of the spiritual Israel, was nurtured, during a portion of His infancy, in that land in which the ancient people of God spent so many years of bondage and sorrow, and from which they were rescued by the special agency of the Most High.* Herod, incensed at the neglect of the wise men to return to him, and the consequent disappointment of his hope, that he should be able to fix precisely on the infant Sovereign, and terminate at once His earthly course, issued an order that all the male children of Bethlehem and its neighbourhood, who were under the age of two years, should be destroyed. This sanguinary edict was in accordance with the well-known cruelty of his character; and its execution threw the deepest gloom over that city, which had been so recently honoured by being made the birth-place of the Redeemer of mankind. The inspired historian beheld in this event a renewed fulfilment of the remarkable words of the ancient prophet, who, by a bold personification, had represented Rachel as rising from her tomb, to weep over the miseries of her descendants, and to sigh inconsolably for their captivity or death.†

The jealous and malignant Herod did not long survive this despotic act. He fell a prey to a most loathsome

* Matthew ii. 12—15.

† Matthew ii. 16—18.

and painful disease; and died universally hated by his subjects and attendants. Joseph, in obedience to a Divine admonition, returned with Mary and her honoured child to the Holy Land, and again settled in the town of Nazareth. Here the childhood and youth of the Redeemer were passed; and as Nazareth was a mean and insignificant place, He was often called in derision, the Nazarene, by those who refused to listen to His teaching and bow to His claims. Thus, to the apprehension of the world, He “grew up as a root out of a dry ground;” and came forth, at length, to the discharge of His prophetic office, without any attraction of earthly dignity or power.*

It would have been gratifying to human curiosity, had the sacred historians furnished us with a copious narrative of the early life of the Redeemer on earth. But the wisdom of God has not judged it necessary that the occurrences of His private history should be recorded. One incident only has been handed down to us; and this stands connected with His *first* visit—as a child rising to years of thoughtfulness—to the temple of God. Joseph and Mary were accustomed to go up every year to Jerusalem, at the feast of the passover; and when the child Jesus had attained the age of twelve years, He accompanied them, to participate in the solemnities of that memorable season. But He lingered in the temple,—the house of His Father,†—the place where some of His most impressive discourses were to be delivered, and some of His most stupendous miracles performed. His parents had already commenced their

* Matthew ii. 19—23; Isaiah liii. 2.

† Luke ii. 49.

journey homeward; and during the first day, as they supposed Him to be with some other members of the company, their fears were not awakened respecting Him. When, however, they could not find Him among the pilgrim-band, they returned to Jerusalem with anxious and sorrowful hearts, to seek Him there. They found Him in an apartment of the temple, where the teachers of the law usually sat to expound it to their disciples, permitting them also to propose questions as to its import, and occasionally interrogating them, with a view to suggest trains of thought, or to elicit the extent of the knowledge which they had acquired. Here was the child Jesus, taking part in the conversation which was going on; and as He listened with earnest attention to the observations of the doctors, and sometimes addressed questions to them, and replied to inquiries which they put to Him, all that heard Him were astonished at the thoughtfulness and depth of knowledge which He evinced.* Already was He "filled with wisdom,"† and adorned with every spiritual grace; and His pure and heavenly mind found its most delightful employment in the study and exposition of Divine truth. But many years were yet to elapse, before the treasures of that mind should be publicly given forth to men; and during these, He abode with Joseph and Mary, showing them that dutiful respect and submission which are suited to the filial relation.‡ It was not until He had reached the age of mature manhood, that He came forth to proclaim the glad tidings of "the kingdom of God,"—to shed a clear and steady light on all those truths which

* Luke ii. 41—47.

† Luke ii. 40.

‡ Luke ii. 51, 52.

most intimately affect the human spirit,—and to warn the impenitent, and the insincere professor of religion, of the ruin that awaited them. But the appearance of our Lord as a public Teacher was preceded by some remarkable circumstances which now claim our attention.

CHAPTER III.

THE CIRCUMSTANCES WHICH IMMEDIATELY PRECEDED THE REDEEMER'S ENTRANCE ON HIS PUBLIC MINISTRY.

NEARLY thirty years had passed away, since the attention of many of the more thoughtful among the ancient people of God had been awakened by the remarkable circumstances which attended the birth and circumcision of the son of Zacharias and Elisabeth; and during these, John had grown up in retirement, endued by the grace of God with many spiritual excellencies, and especially distinguished by holy courage and decision.* The time had now arrived, when he was to enter upon the important service assigned to him, as the harbinger of the Messiah; and he appeared “in the spirit and power of Elijah,” to announce the near approach of “the kingdom of God,” and to summon men to repentance, as that which only could prepare them to enjoy its blessings.† The principal scene of his labours was the thinly-inhabited district to the east of Jerusalem, and

* Luke i. 80.

† Matthew iii. 2.

near the river Jordan,—a district usually termed “the wilderness of Judaea.” Here, clothed in a garment of camel’s hair, and having, like his great predecessor Elijah,* a leathern girdle about his loins, he declared his solemn message, and aroused the solicitude of many hearts. His food corresponded to the austerity of his appearance; for he subsisted chiefly on the wild honey found in the rocks and the cavities of trees, and on dried locusts, a species of food permitted by the law, and in use among the humblest of the people.† His addresses were distinguished by remarkable earnestness and power: he enforced the duty of repentance on all who came to him, and charged them to manifest the genuineness of their sorrow for sin, and their aversion from it, in the whole of their outward conduct. He reproved injustice, oppression, and a cold-hearted selfishness, that could enjoy the superfluities of life, and look with indifference on the wants and privations of the poor.‡ He sought to impress on every mind the reality of God’s moral administration, and the perfect conformity of all His decisions to eternal truth and rectitude. He exposed the fallacy of every plea by which men sought to allay their apprehensions of a coming judgment, and to soothe their consciences to repose, while yet they continued in the practice of iniquity. Terrible and overwhelming was his address to some of the Pharisees and Sadducees who came to him, and whose acknowledgment of sin appeared to him to be formal and insincere. He said to them, “O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bring forth, therefore, fruits meet for repentance: and

* 2 Kings i. 8.

† Matthew iii. 4.

‡ Luke iii. 10—14.

think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham. And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire."* We can scarcely read these words without being deeply affected with the truth, that in the Divine government, personal character, and not external privilege, will form the ground of ultimate approval. It is not a relation to Abraham by natural descent, or an outward relation to the adorable Redeemer Himself, as the Head of the universal church, which will suffice to secure our safety, amidst the awful glories of the last day,—but the participation of Abraham's faith and obedient love, and that union with Christ, which results from self-renouncing faith in His blood, and which involves the reception of His Spirit as the Spirit of life, and purity, and love.

While the ministry of John was thus awakening and impressive, it was not destitute of comfort to the troubled and anxious spirit. He declared the almost immediate appearance of the great Deliverer, through whom the forgiveness of sins, and the richest communications of Divine influence, should be vouchsafed to the humble mind. The baptism which he administered to those who confessed their sinfulness,† implied, on their part, a penitent waiting for the Saviour.‡ Gladly did John set forth his own littleness in comparison of that mightier Prophet whose way he was sent to prepare. Though his own appearance on earth preceded that of

* Matthew iii. 7—10.

† Matthew iii. 6; Mark i. 5.

‡ Matthew iii. 11; John i. 31; Acts xix. 4.

the Redeemer, yet he declared, that long ere he was born into the world, the Redeemer had existed in respect of His higher nature. “After me cometh a Man which is preferred before me: for He was before me.”* Though himself distinguished by the circumstances of his birth, and exercising a ministry of remarkable power and influence, he affirmed that the Prophet who was about to appear, was so glorious and august, that he was unworthy to perform for Him the most menial offices,—that even to unloose and bear His sandals was an honour of which he was undeserving. He contrasted the baptism which he administered with that of the Messiah, who should send down on all His believing people the Holy Ghost to purify and refine their hearts. He spoke of Him as possessed of unerring discrimination, and invested with supreme authority; so that, when the period of judicial decision should arrive, He should separate the unholy and insincere from the humble, devout, and obedient among His people, and should dispense with unfailing accuracy the rewards and punishments of the eternal state. “I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but He that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire:—whose fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly purge His floor, and gather His wheat into the garner; but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.”†

The preaching of the Baptist awakened on every hand a spirit of inquiry, and produced a deep impression on many who had before been careless and worldly.

* John i. 30.

† Matthew iii. 11, 12.

Multitudes flocked to him from Jerusalem and Judæa, and from the region round about Jordan;* and as they listened to his faithful warnings, and the solemn charge that they should repent and await the appearance of the great Restorer, their hearts were softened, and, confessing their sinfulness, they sought the baptism which he administered. It was evident to all, that God had visited His people, and that scenes of yet deeper interest were about to be unfolded. Vague reports of the Baptist's character and claims were circulated among those who had not themselves listened to his teaching; and some even imagined that he was the Messiah, to whose coming they had so long looked forward with eager desire and hope.†

But before we can complete our notice of the ministry of John, or exhibit the full import of the testimony which he bore to the Lord Jesus, it is necessary for us to turn to the Redeemer Himself, and contemplate His solemn inauguration to the prophetic office. When the Saviour had spent about thirty years upon earth, in the retirement and obscurity of Nazareth,‡ He came up from that town to the river Jordan, where John was baptizing; and the first interview took place between them. It had been expressly ordered by Divine wisdom, that John had grown up without any personal intercourse with that greater Prophet whose way he was sent to prepare. When he entered upon his mission, and aroused by his startling announcements and faithful warnings the slumbering attention of the Jewish people, he had never seen the Redeemer, whose almost immediate manifestation he so confidently declared. But the

* Matthew iii. 5; Mark i. 5. † Luke iii. 15. ‡ Luke iii. 23.

intimation had been given to him, that, when the fitting time should arrive, he should see the Messiah, and be left without any doubt as to the illustrious Individual on whom the hopes of Israel and of the world were to repose.* Our Lord came to John, and engaged in conversation with him, requesting that He too might receive baptism from his hands. But there was that in His manner and discourse which impressed the mind of the holy Baptist with a conviction of His purity and greatness; and a secret intimation from above caused him to look upon the stranger who now came to him, as the promised Deliverer. True to his character as the forerunner of the Messiah, and conscious of his infinite inferiority to Him whose coming he announced, he said to our Lord, "I have need to be baptized of Thee, and comest Thou to me?" The Saviour replied, with beautiful simplicity and wisdom, blended with authority, "Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness." John could no longer hesitate. He baptized the distinguished applicant; and as Jesus went up from the stream of the Jordan, engaged in mental prayer, the heavens were opened,—the Holy Spirit descended with a hovering motion, and in a dove-like form, and lighted upon Him,—and the voice of the Eternal Father declared from on high, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."† Thus was the mind of John satisfied as to the person of the great Restorer; thus were the loftiest claims of the Lord Jesus attested and established; and thus was He inaugurated to His office as the Teacher of mankind. From this time, whenever He appeared, John directed

* John i. 31, 33.

† Matthew iii. 13—17.

to Him personally the attention of his disciples, and commended them to Him for richer instruction than it was in his power to afford. The Saviour, by submitting to baptism,—though He had no sin to confess, but was ever pure and spotless,—had honoured the ministry of His immediate forerunner; and now the Baptist felt that his mission was soon to terminate,—that a greater light was about to rise upon the world, to scatter its gloom and sadness, and to disclose to the humble and contrite spirit the way of salvation and peace.

But the Redeemer did not immediately enter upon His public ministry. The august scene of His baptism was to be followed by a period of deep humiliation and mental conflict. He who had been so solemnly declared to be THE SON OF GOD, and the object of the Father's ineffable complacency and delight, was to become a sharer of our temptations, and to experience the pain which arises from suggestions to evil, again and again presented to the mind. He had assumed our nature in its lowliness and weakness; and it was a part of the great plan of our redemption, that He should identify Himself with His people,—that He should in all things be made like unto us, whom He condescends to call His brethren.* Thus did He submit to be exposed, even as we are, to the subtle and malignant attacks of the prince of darkness, whose empire He came to destroy; that in every age His tempted followers might have the assurance of His exquisite sympathy with them, as well as of His infinite power, and wisdom, and goodness. During forty days, His immaculate human spirit was repeatedly assailed by the suggestions of the evil

* Hebrews ii. 17, 18.

one;* and through this period, like Moses and Elijah in former times, He ate nothing. When these days had expired, the Saviour “ hungered;” and then the tempter, permitted to assume a visible form, came to Him amidst the rough solitudes of the wilderness of Judæa, and said, “ If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread.” The Redeemer, instantly feeling that to work a miracle under such circumstances, and for such an object, would be unworthy of His character and mission, and that it became Him rather to show forth the great principle of trust in the benignant care of Divine Providence, replied, “ It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.” Satan, finding that he was not at once authoritatively dismissed, but still permitted to continue his assault on the Redeemer’s purity and wisdom, conducted Him to the temple at Jerusalem, and ascending with Him one of its battlements, the height of which was so great, that no one could bear to look down from it, said, “ If Thou be the Son of God, cast Thyself down: for it is written, He shall give His angels charge concerning thee; and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone.” Plausible as this reasoning might seem, it could not impose on the spiritual mind of our Lord; and He immediately affirmed the principle, that no one should presumptuously rush into danger, in order to experience the fulfilment of the promise of Divine protection. “ Jesus said unto him, It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.” But the great adversary, though baffled by

* Luke iv. 2.

the wisdom and firmness of the Redeemer, ventured yet again to harass His pure and heavenly mind. The scene of the third temptation was a high mountain, probably in the wilderness of Judæa; and here the deceiver, presenting to our Lord, in a visionary representation, all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them, affirmed that these had been delivered to him, and were under his control, and that, if only our Lord would do homage to him, all should be placed at His disposal. This was a suggestion too daring and impious to be endured; and the Saviour, asserting His peculiar authority, replied, “Get thee hence, Satan : for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve.” Instantly the prince of darkness obeyed; and retiring, for a season, from the presence of the great Deliverer, left Him calm and serene; and the holy angels, who had witnessed the conflict with deep interest, and had rejoiced to behold Satan triumphed over by One in human form, came to their Lord, amidst the lowness in which He now appeared, and joyfully “ministered unto Him.” *

Many questions may suggest themselves in relation to our Lord’s temptation in the wilderness, which cannot be distinctly answered, and the solution of which would not contribute to our spiritual improvement; but there are some aspects of this remarkable transaction on which our minds may be reverently fixed. The history of this world, when regarded in the light of Divine truth, presents to us the agency of malignant spirits, who having themselves forfeited heaven, are now intent on disturbing, to the widest possible extent, the order and

* Matthew iv. 1—11; Luke iv. 1—13.

happiness of Jehovah's empire. Their efforts are permitted by the Most High, though only within limits which He has established. At the head of the "principalities" and "powers" of darkness, stands Satan, the most malignant and subtle of them all. It was he who seduced our first parents from their allegiance to Jehovah; and it is he who, with untiring perseverance, has sought in every age to insult the majesty of the Eternal One, and to pollute and degrade the nature of man, by introducing and upholding idolatry with its cruel and obscene rites. These unseen realities could, in the nature of things, only be disclosed to us by revelation; but when they are made known, they derive ample confirmation from many facts in the history of this world, and from the tendency of cherished sin to harden the heart and fill it with an utter hatred of purity and goodness in others. To the powers of darkness, the Redeemer could not fail to be an object of deep, though painful, interest: and we can easily conceive, that the prince of the apostate angels, beholding Him in the lowliness of ordinary manhood, would be anxious to try whether in any way he could pollute His humanity, or lead Him to an act unworthy of His high and glorious character. And when he found that he was permitted to assail the Redeemer,—that his first approaches were not authoritatively forbidden,—he was emboldened to proceed yet further, and suggest the most revolting thoughts to His holy mind.

To the important bearing of our Lord's temptation on the plan of human recovery, we have already alluded. It was a part of His humiliation, and one which assures us of His deep sympathy with us in our inward con-

flicts. He endured the assaults of Satan, as *the Head of His church, the First-born among many brethren*. This character of our Lord appears in all the arrangements of the mediatorial scheme; so that the mysterious scene of His temptation in the wilderness is in *perfect harmony* with every other part of His great undertaking as the Saviour of mankind. We have to contemplate Him as our Brother, while we bow before Him as our Lord. It was as sustaining this character that He became the subject of weakness, and pain, and sorrow. In this character He presented an attractive pattern of holiness and love; and He has left it in charge to us to follow His example, and tread in His steps.* As our Brother, He lay in the cold and silent tomb, and then rose to a new and glorious life, “the firstfruits of them that slept.”† And now He lives and reigns above as the Head of His universal church; He has entered heaven as the Forerunner of His people; and His appearance there is the pledge that they shall rise, at last, to that abode of light and purity, while His glorified human form is the model to which their restored nature shall be conformed by His resistless power.‡

While the Saviour was enduring, in retirement and solitude, the humiliation of being tempted by the prince of darkness, John was pursuing his career as a faithful and laborious preacher of repentance. So great a sensation was produced in Jerusalem, by the reports of those who had visited the neighbourhood of the Jordan, and had listened to the Baptist’s ministry, that the elders of the Jews sent a deputation of priests and Levites to ask

* 1 John ii. 6; 1 Peter ii. 20—23. † 1 Corinthians xv. 20—23.

‡ John xiv. 1—3; Hebrews vi. 20; Philippians iii. 20, 21.

him, who he was, and in what character he appeared. He immediately set at rest the question which had called forth their deepest interest, by affirming, "I am not the Messiah." When again they inquired, "Art thou Elias?"—conceiving that that distinguished servant of God would actually appear on earth a second time, and resume his ministry,—he replied with equal distinctness, "I am not." When they still further asked, "Art thou one of the prophets of a former generation, raised from the dead?" he again replied, "I am not:" and on their demanding what were really his claims, he declared, "I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the LORD, as said the prophet Esaias."* Beautiful and impressive was this statement of the holy Baptist! While it affirmed the fulfilment of that remarkable prediction of Isaiah in his own labours, it showed how deep was his conviction of the preparatory character of his mission, and how habitually his mind turned to that adorable Person, whose approach he was commissioned to announce. It was his high and distinguishing honour to proclaim, "Make straight the way of the LORD!"—and as he dwelt on the Divine and eternal glory of Him who was so soon to appear among men, though in outward lowness, he felt that he himself must retire into comparative obscurity, rejoicing only to have called attention to One who is worthy of the unlimited reverence, and trust, and love, of every human heart.

The day after this incident, the Redeemer, now solemnly inaugurated to His prophetic office, and prepared by His temptation in the wilderness, to sympathise with

* John i. 19—23.

His people in their conflicts and sorrows, revisited the scene of the Baptist's labours. John recognised Him with holy satisfaction and joy ; and looking forward, through the influence of the prophetic Spirit, to His sacrificial death as the great and effectual atonement for the world's guilt, exclaimed, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world!"* And then, to fix the attention of his followers more earnestly on the Redeemer, who now appeared among them, he added, "This is He of whom I said, After me cometh a Man which is preferred before me : for He was before me. And I knew Him not : but that He should be made manifest to Israel, therefore am I come baptizing with water." "I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it abode upon Him. And I knew Him not : but He that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and remaining on Him, the same is He which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost."† On the following day, John repeated his exclamation, as he stood with two of his disciples, and looked upon the Saviour as He walked along : and the two disciples immediately went to our Lord, who received them kindly, and even invited them to spend the evening with Him at the place where He was then staying.‡ One of these was Andrew, the brother of Simon Peter, who embraced the first opportunity of introducing his relative to Jesus, assuring him that they had now found the long-expected Messiah.|| Philip also, and Nathanael, were at this period brought into intercourse with the

* John i. 29.

† John i. 30—33.

‡ John i. 35—39.

|| John i. 40—42.

Redeemer ; and although the latter, when first invited by his friend to come and behold the Messiah, in the person of "Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph," replied, "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth ?" he was convinced by our Lord's first remark, that He was possessed of omniscient discernment ; and recognising in Him a more than human Prophet, as well as the promised Deliverer, he exclaimed, " Rabbi, Thou art the Son of God; Thou art the King of Israel!"*

Jesus, now attended by a few disciples, who believed in His Messiahship, and gratefully listened to His conversation, though not yet called to attend Him so as to forsake their worldly engagements, departed to Galilee, where His first miracle was performed, and the glory of His almighty power first displayed to men. The Baptist, meanwhile, continued his labours, still calling upon men to repent of their sins, and directing them to that greater Prophet whose ministry was now commencing. Gladly did he receive every intimation which was brought to him of the increasing influence of our Lord, and the regard shown to Him by the people generally, though he lamented that so few of them would prove sincere and earnest inquirers after truth. A remarkable illustration of this state of feeling, on his part, is presented to us in connexion with his last recorded testimony to the dignity and claims of the Redeemer. When our Lord had returned for a short time to Judæa, and some persons came to John and said, " Rabbi, He that was with thee beyond Jordan, to whom thou barest witness, behold, the same baptizeth, and all men come to Him," John replied, "A man can receive nothing, except it be given

* John i. 43—49.

him from heaven. Ye yourselves bear me witness that I said, I am not the Messiah, but that I am sent before Him. He that hath the bride is the bridegroom : but the friend of the bridegroom, which standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom's voice : this my joy therefore is fulfilled. He must increase, but I must decrease. He that cometh from above is above all : he that is of the earth is earthly, and speaketh of the earth : He that cometh from heaven is above all. And what He hath seen and heard, that He testifieth ; and no man receiveth His testimony. He that hath received His testimony, hath set to his seal that God is true. For He whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God : for God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto Him. The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into His hand. He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life : and he that believeth not the Son, shall not see life ; but the wrath of God abideth on him."* Thus, as the voice of the Baptist dies away upon our ear, we are reminded by his final testimony, that Jesus, the Redeemer, is THE SON OF GOD, the object of the Father's ineffable complacency, and invested as the Mediator with universal dominion ; and we are admonished that our eternal destiny must depend on our faith in Him, and our obedience to His precepts. Soon after this, the forerunner of our Lord, having reproved Herod Antipas, the tetrarch of Galilee, for the incestuous connexion which he maintained with Herodias, the wife of his brother Philip, became an object of intense dislike to that abandoned woman. At her instigation, Herod, though restrained by his reverence for the Baptist's

* John iii. 27—36.

character, and his fear of the people, from putting him to death, committed him to prison, and thus interrupted his widely-extended labours.* During a considerable portion of our Lord's public ministry, John languished in confinement ; and, at length, fell a victim to the rashness of Herod, and the malice and revenge of her whose licentious and unprincipled career he had faithfully reproved.†

CHAPTER IV.

THE COMMENCEMENT OF THE REDEEMER'S MINISTRY. HIS VISIT TO JERUSALEM AT THE PASSOVER. HIS RETURN THROUGH SAMARIA TO GALILEE, AND PREACHING AT NAZARETH.

OUR Lord had now retired from the scene of the Baptist's labours near the river Jordan, and had gone with a few who believed in Him as the Messiah, and eagerly sought instruction from His lips, to the northern district of the Holy Land. Within a few days after His arrival, there was a marriage in the town of Cana, to which Himself, and His mother, now probably left a widow,‡ and His disciples, were invited. This incident,

• Matthew xiv. 3—5; Mark vi. 17—20; Luke iii. 19, 20.

† Matthew xiv. 6—12; Mark vi. 21—29.

‡ It is remarkable that Joseph is never mentioned by any of the evangelists after the commencement of our Lord's public ministry ; but that Mary is repeatedly spoken of separately from him. This circumstance certainly favours the opinion which we have stated above, and which is generally adopted by those who have studied the evangelical history.

in itself inconsiderable, has acquired a peculiar interest from its connexion with the first of those miracles, by which the Lord Jesus attested His claims, and confirmed the absolute truth of all His declarations and promises. The invitation was accepted, and Jesus appeared as a guest at the nuptial entertainment. Thus He who came to redeem and sanctify humanity,—whose grace is to hallow every relation of life, and to diffuse its softening influence over our domestic and social intercourse,—honoured by His presence the institution of marriage, and smiled upon the formation of the nuptial bond. It is not improbable, that the anticipation of seeing Jesus at this feast caused a larger attendance than there would otherwise have been; and it was soon found, that the supply of wine was inadequate to the number of the guests. Mary had an impression that her distinguished Son would interpose; and though He mildly but firmly reproved an intimation on her part, that He should at once exert His power to supply the want, reminding her that the time and circumstances of every miraculous act must be left to Himself, she charged the servants instantly to obey any command that He might give them. Jesus, as the entertainment proceeded, directed the attendants to fill six waterpots which stood there with water, and to bear some of it unto the president of the feast. They did as He commanded; and the president, having drunk of the water which the unseen power of the Redeemer had converted into wine, expressed to the bridegroom his astonishment, that he should have reserved until then the good wine, instead of adhering to the usual practice of handing it in the first instance to his guests. “This beginning of miracles,” adds the

apostle John, who has recorded the incident, “did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth His glory; and His disciples believed on Him.”* Here was a development of the almighty energy of the Saviour, blended with an attractive proof of His kindness and condescension. While He mingled with the cheerful company that congratulated the wedded pair, preserving His own spirituality of mind undisturbed, and instructing, doubtless, by His conversation those who sat around, He evinced a power that could control universal nature, and effect, by a single volition, results to which the mightiest efforts of man are altogether inadequate.

The Redeemer proceeded from Cana to Capernaum,† a town on the coast of the sea of Galilee, which He afterwards made the chief place of His residence. He did not, however, now continue there for any length of time; but, as the feast of the passover was at hand, He went up to Jerusalem, to attend that great annual solemnity.‡ Here He appeared as a distinguished Prophet, reproofing and driving out those who profaned the courts of the temple,§ and performing miracles which impressed every thoughtful mind with a conviction of His high and peculiar authority, and called forth a profound regard to all His teaching.||

One declaration which He uttered at this time, is well deserving of our attention, as showing how habitually He looked forward, from the very commencement of His ministry, to the violent *death* which He was to undergo, and how uniformly He referred to *His own resurrection*, as the great and crowning miracle which should estab-

* John ii. 1—11.

† John ii. 12.

‡ John ii. 13.

§ John ii. 14—17.

|| John ii. 23; iii. 2; iv. 45.

lish for ever the truth of His claims. The authority which He exercised in driving out those who were carrying on traffic in the courts of the temple, and the emphatic manner in which He said, "Make not *My Father's* house an house of merchandise," caused many of the Jews to ask, "What sign shovest thou unto us, seeing that thou doest these things?" Jesus replied, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." They understood Him to speak of the temple before them; but He referred to the temple of His body, as that in which the Deity peculiarly dwelt. A degree of mystery then rested on these words of His: but when He had suffered as the great Sacrifice for sin, and had risen again from the dead, His disciples gratefully recalled this saying to their remembrance, as well as the more explicit announcements which He afterwards made; and their faith was confirmed and established.*

It was during this visit to Jerusalem that Nicodemus, a member of the Sanhedrim, sought a private interview with our Lord. The conversation which passed between them has been recorded by that disciple whose spiritual mind loved to dwell on the Redeemer's sayings, and to retrace the developments of His more than human dignity, and holiness, and love. The Jewish ruler began by avowing his decided conviction that Jesus was a divinely-commissioned Prophet. "Rabbi," he said, "we know that thou art a Teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him." The Saviour's reply directed him to a great and essential truth, bearing on the formation of a religious character, and the nature of that kingdom which

* John ii. 18—22.

He came to establish. “Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.”* The mind of Nicodemus was perplexed. He perceived at once that the words of our Lord could not be literally understood; and he was wholly at a loss what figurative meaning was to be assigned to them. He could conceive that it might be necessary for a Gentile to be introduced by circumcision and baptism to another family,—even the family of Abraham; but he could not understand in what sense they who, like himself, already stood in a covenant-relation to God, as the descendants of that eminent patriarch, admitted by circumcision to the highest external privileges, must become the subjects of a new birth. Our Lord then declared to him the *spiritual* nature of the change which He intended, and again affirmed in the strongest manner its absolute and universal necessity. “Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.”† There appears to have been a reference in the phrase “of water” to the rite of baptism, as that which was even then in use, and which, with a Christian import, our Lord intended to perpetuate in His church; but it is unquestionable that the chief stress was laid by Him on the being born of the Spirit. For He immediately added, “That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is *born of the Spirit* is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again. The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst

* John iii. 1—3.

† John iii. 5.

not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth : so is every one that is *born of the Spirit.*”*

Here then a great and momentous truth is pressed by the Redeemer Himself upon the attention of every human being. To constitute us His people,—to give us a title to the privileges of His kingdom,—we must receive from above *a new spiritual life.* The energy of the Holy Spirit must be put forth upon our souls,—causing them to glow with new affections,—to breathe in a new element,—to aspire to new delights. Instead of being cold towards God, and averse from His purity and justice, they are to be attracted to Him by a sweet and powerful influence, so as to seek His friendship, and delight in His service. Instead of being surrendered to selfish passions, they are to expand with generous and benevolent emotions. Instead of turning away from spiritual and heavenly truth, they are to feel a sacred pleasure in religious meditation, and the devout study of the Divine word. So decisive and complete is the change which must pass upon our minds; and this, not as the result of a lengthened process of self-discipline, but through the communication of a new life, breathed into them by the Holy Ghost. His operations, indeed, upon the human spirit, involve mysteries which we cannot unfold; but even as we hear the sound of the wind, though we cannot trace the laws which regulate its currents, so may we be assured of the presence and power of the life-giving Spirit by the holy affections and heavenly principles which His influence calls into existence.

But the Redeemer directed the attention of Nicodemus to yet sublimer truths. He disclosed to him the dignity

* John iii. 6—8.

of His own person,—that, though He appeared in the lowliness of ordinary humanity, He had come down from heaven, and was possessed of a nature distinguished even by omnipresence: “And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but He that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven.”* He affirmed the necessity of His sufferings and death. The unearthly glory of His person, instead of being a pledge that His career should be one of unmixed joy, prepared Him rather to make an effectual atonement for the world’s guilt, and thus to become the object of trust to every contrite sinner: “And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have eternal life.”† This was a theme upon which the Saviour dwelt, from the very first, with deep and solemn interest. He looked forward to the agony of the garden, and the shame and suffering of the cross, as essential to our recovery. He placed the scenes of ignominy and sorrow through which He was to pass, in connexion with His dignity as the Son of God, and His ineffable dearness to the Father; and referred to them as affording the most impressive views of the greatness of the Divine love to man, and as laying a sure and sufficient ground for human confidence and hope: “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through Him might be saved.”‡ But the Redeemer did not close the conversation without a solemn warning to

* John iii. 13.

† John iii. 14, 15.

‡ John iii. 16, 17.

Nicodemus, and to all to whom His words might be made known,—that the most momentous consequences depend, in the case of every man, on the reception or neglect of the offer of mercy through His blood: “He that believeth on Him is not condemned ; but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved. But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God.”*

The interview of our Lord with Nicodemus, which we have now considered, is, in every point of view, instructive and important. We cannot but observe the fidelity with which the Saviour admonished one of the most honourable members of the Jewish council of the necessity of a spiritual change, and the readiness with which He unfolded to him the plan of human salvation. This conversation, indeed, though it occurred towards the commencement of the Redeemer’s ministry, may justly be regarded as one of the most important recorded by the evangelists. The great Prophet of Israel welcomed the sincere and candid inquirer after truth, who came to Him in private,—disclosed to him His own peculiar glory as the only-begotten of the Father,—impressed on his mind the spiritual nature of religion,—and directed his faith and hope to His own approaching sacrifice.

But another incident, related by the apostle John,

now claims our attention. It is one which beautifully illustrates the condescension of the Redeemer, in imparting light to a mind enveloped in spiritual darkness, and devoted solely to the world.

When the Lord Jesus departed from Jerusalem, after the close of the paschal solemnity, He spent some time in Judæa; where His disciples, who accompanied Him on this journey, administered baptism to those who, like themselves, wished to acknowledge Him as the promised Messiah.* But when the powerful impression produced by His ministry had awakened the jealousy of the Pharisees of Jerusalem, He purposed to return to Galilee.† His route lay through Samaria; and as He approached the city of Sychar, he sat down weary, on a well, which the patriarch Jacob had dug, and which still retained his venerated name. It was now mid-day; His disciples had gone forward to the city to purchase food; and He sat alone on the well. The special providence of God led a woman of that city to come at this unusual hour to draw water; and Jesus, to introduce a conversation on spiritual things, said to her, "Give me to drink." She immediately expressed her surprise, that one whose appearance and dialect shewed him to be a Jew, should request a favour of her, a woman of Samaria; since no intimate and friendly intercourse was usual between the two nations. But little did she think, that He whom she now addressed was the Friend and Saviour not of one nation only, but of all! It was His condescending grace which led Him to prefer that request, and to engage in conversation with her; and in reply to her expression of astonishment, He uttered

* John iii. 22, compared with John iv. 1—3. † John iv. 1—3.

the remarkable words, "If thou knewst the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give Me to drink ; thou wouldest have asked of Him, and He would have given thee living water." Gladly would our minds linger on the deep truths comprehended in this saying of our Lord. He is Himself *the* Giver of spiritual blessings to our lost and perishing world ; through Him that influence of the Spirit is vouchsafed to us, which only can allay the painful thirst of our souls, and render them fresh and joyous ; and if we come to Him in humble faith, He will impart to us this inestimable gift with the greatest readiness and freedom. But the woman of Samaria had no perception of the deep spiritual import of our Lord's words ; and she replied, "Sir, thou hast nothing to draw with, and the well is deep ; from whence, then, hast thou that living water ? Art thou greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well, and drank thereof himself, and his children, and his cattle ?" Beautiful and full of meaning was the answer of our Lord ! "Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again : but whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst ; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." The grace of the promised Spirit, unlike the stream which for a time alleviates the thirst of man, is an unfailing source of peace and satisfaction within the mind itself ; and as it diffuses its refreshing and enlivening influence through all the powers of our nature, it forms the earnest of a holier and better life. But the woman of Samaria either failed to apprehend, even now, the spiritual import of the Redeemer's words, or resisted that conviction of her

personal need of salvation, which was beginning to rise within her breast. Again she replied, "Sir, give me this water, that I thirst not, neither come hither to draw." Jesus then spoke to her conscience; and with peculiar emphasis said, "Go, call thy husband, and come hither." The woman answered, "I have no husband;" and then our Lord evinced His perfect knowledge of all the circumstances of her life, by adding, "Thou hast well said, I have no husband: for thou hast had five husbands; and he whom thou now hast, is not thy husband: in that saidst thou truly." Affected and convinced by the proof which He had now given of His more than human discernment, she acknowledged that He must be a distinguished prophet; and, turning away from a topic which she felt to be so reproving, she asked Him to decide the great question on which the Jews and the Samaritans were divided, whether the temple at Jerusalem, or that on Mount Gerizim, was the proper place at which sacrifices should be presented to God. The Redeemer, while He affirmed the superior claims of the Jewish services, announced with great impressiveness the truth, that a dispensation was about to be introduced, under which this controversy should lose all its interest; and the *spiritual* worship of God, which only could be acceptable to Him, should be established in every land: "Woman, believe Me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father. Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews. But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship Him.

God is a Spirit: and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth." The woman, in reply, expressed her conviction that the promised Messiah would indeed appear, and that when He should come, He would place everything that related to the worship of God in the clearest light; and then our Lord simply and emphatically declared, "I that speak unto thee am He."*

The conversation was now interrupted by the return of the disciples, with the provisions which they had procured. Their astonishment was awakened, when they first perceived that their Master was engaged in earnest conversation with this Samaritan woman; but their reverence for His character restrained them from giving expression to this feeling, or inquiring into the reason of His conduct. They came forward, and affectionately requested Him to take some food. The reply of our Lord beautifully illustrates one feature of His character,—His uniform and entire devotion to His great work as the Mediator. "I have meat to eat," He said, "that ye know not of;" and when, in surprise, they said one to another, "Hath any man brought Him aught to eat?" He added, "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me, and to finish His work." Every part of our Lord's conduct, while on earth, confirmed this declaration. He appeared among men to accomplish the purposes of infinite wisdom, and holiness, and love; and He was ever ready to seek and save the lost,—to pour the light of truth upon our dark and perishing world,—and to unfold to men the spiritual blessings of His Gospel, until at length He was lifted up on the cross, and accomplished the work of atonement. He was now near a city, many

* John iv. 4—26.

of the inhabitants of which were prepared candidly to inquire into the evidences of His claims; and He designed that the impression produced on the humble individual whose conscience He had aroused, and to whom He had declared the spirituality of religion, should be the means of awakening the earnest attention of many around her. And with a feeling of benevolent and holy satisfaction, He called on His disciples to contemplate the abundant spiritual harvest which lay before them, and which they had only to reap with joy and gratitude.*

The woman, meanwhile, had left her waterpot, and gone into the city. Immediately she published the remarkable incident, that at Jacob's well she had found a Stranger, who had told her of the secret transactions of her whole life, and whose omniscience proved Him to be, what He Himself affirmed, the long-expected Messiah. The interest of many was immediately awakened; and, going to Him at the well, they entreated Him to come into their city, and remain for a while among them. He complied with their request, so far as to spend two days at Sychar; during which He discoursed to them on the great truths which relate to human salvation, and the spiritual blessings about to be offered to men of every land. Many of the Samaritans of that city were so impressed with the testimony of the woman, relative to our Lord's acquaintance with her whole history, that they at once admitted His high and peculiar claims; and many others, when they had listened to His teaching, distinguished as it was by depth of wisdom, and by heavenly purity and power, gratefully owned Him as the Messiah, and said to the

* John iv. 27, 31—38.

woman, "Now we believe, not because of thy saying: for we have heard Him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world."*

When the Redeemer departed from Sychar, He went forward to Galilee, and came to the town of Cana, where He had before performed the miracle of converting water into wine. While He remained there, He gave a second and still more remarkable proof of His unlimited power and knowledge. A nobleman, resident at Capernaum, whose anxiety was called forth by the dangerous illness of his son, when he heard that Jesus had returned from Judæa, went to Him at Cana, and earnestly besought Him that He would come to Capernaum and restore his child, whom he had left at the point of death. The Saviour, knowing that although this nobleman had a considerable degree of confidence in His power to heal, yet he, and the persons who stood around him, seemed to restrict that power to cases in which He should be present with the objects of His benevolent regard, said, in reply to his application, "Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe." The nobleman, whose parental solicitude now amounted almost to agony, and who felt that any delay on the Redeemer's part must be fatal to his hopes, said to Him, with imploring earnestness, "Sir, come down ere my child die." "Go thy way," said Jesus; "thy son liveth." Who can fail to recognise in this address of the Redeemer the language and manner of Him who is the Fountain of life, and whose energy is everywhere put forth? Unlike His apostles, who performed miracles as the mere instruments of One infinitely higher than themselves, and with a

* John iv. 28—30, 39—42.

distinct and reverent acknowledgment of that “name” in honour of which they were effected, Jesus speaks and acts as possessed of an inherent dignity and power, before which universal nature must bow. The nobleman listened to His emphatic words; his faith, strengthened from above, reposed on the veracity and power of the Saviour; his inward agitation and fear gave place to serenity and peace; and he immediately began his journey homeward to embrace his restored child. On the following day his servants met him, and with light and cheerful hearts told him, “Thy son liveth.” The father immediately inquired, at what hour he began to amend; and to his joy and satisfaction found, that it was at the very time when the Redeemer spoke that the fever departed from him, and the freshness and energy of health were again imparted to his wasted frame.*

After some time our Lord proceeded to Nazareth, where He had spent the years of His private life.† In this journey His disciples do not appear to have accompanied Him; and it is probable that the claims of their worldly avocations rendered it necessary for them to return to the neighbourhood of the sea of Galilee. His fame, as a religious Teacher, was now widely diffused; and the last stupendous miracle which He wrought in Capernaum, though Himself at a distance from it, seems to have produced, even in Nazareth, a considerable sensation.‡ According to His established custom, the Redeemer went on the Sabbath into the synagogue, and, as the service proceeded, He stood up to read. There was handed to Him the book of the prophet Isaiah; and, opening it, He read the beautiful and encouraging

* John iv. 43—54.

† Luke iv. 16.

‡ Luke iv. 23.

passage in which that prophet describes the character of the Messiah's ministry: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because He hath anointed me to preach the Gospel to the poor; He hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord." Having read these emphatic words, He rolled up the book, and gave it again to the attendant; and sitting down, according to the custom of the Jewish rabbies when about to expound the Scriptures, He declared to the assembly, amidst their profound silence, that even now these declarations of the prophet were fulfilled in His own ministry,—that He was the Anointed of Jehovah, sent to proclaim to the sorrowful and fainting spirit the message of consolation and peace, and to lead forth the captives of Satan from their state of bondage and gloom. Deep was the impression which His discourse produced on many of His hearers. It awakened, indeed, the astonishment of all who were present; and as they reflected on the peculiar authority and grace by which it was distinguished, and on the benignant and inviting character of many of His sayings, they felt that they had been listening to no ordinary teacher. But this conviction soon gave place to a feeling of envy, and to the prejudices which they had formed against Him as having grown up among themselves in outward meanness and obscurity; and they said one to another, "Is not this Joseph's son?" Our Lord well knew the thoughts which were associated in their minds with this inquiry: and in reply He told them, that they might perhaps be ready to demand of

Him to perform among them, as the inhabitants of His own town, those works of power by which He had distinguished Capernaum; but that they were not in a state of mind to receive such favours, and that it is not for man to dictate to Divine wisdom, in respect to the occasions on which the miraculous energy of God should be put forth, or the persons on whose behalf it should be exerted. He referred them to events in the history of Elijah and Elisha, which even showed that in some cases God had seen fit to bestow on Gentiles favours which He had withheld from members of the house of Israel. The fury of the assembly was called forth by these remarks; and, rising up, they thrust Him out of the synagogue, and led Him to the very brow of the hill on which the town was built, intending to cast Him down headlong: but here His unseen power restrained their malice, and, passing through the midst of them unhurt, He left the place which had so ungratefully rejected the message of salvation.*

From Nazareth the Lord Jesus went to Capernaum,†—a town eminently fitted to be the usual place of His residence during His labours in the northern district of the Holy Land. Its population was considerable; and being situated on the shore of the sea of Galilee, it afforded facilities of access to the other towns on the borders of that lake. Here the Redeemer taught with great frequency and power; and here many of His stupendous miracles were performed,—miracles which established His claim to be the promised Messiah, and evinced the submission of universal nature to the least intimation of His will.

* Luke iv. 16—30.

† Luke iv. 31; Matthew iv. 13.

CHAPTER V.

GENERAL VIEW OF THE REDEEMER'S TEACHING AND MIRACLES IN GALILEE, UNTIL THE CLOSE OF THE FIRST YEAR OF HIS PUBLIC MINISTRY.

WE have already contemplated the Lord Jesus entering upon the high duties of His office as the Teacher of mankind. We have seen Him in Jerusalem, manifesting displeasure against those who profaned the temple, and performing miracles which awakened the attention of every thoughtful mind. We have listened to the emphatic manner in which He declared to Nicodemus the spirituality of religion, and affirmed the necessity of His own sacrificial death. We have followed Him in His journey through Samaria, and have marked the condescension and fidelity with which He instructed and reproved the woman who came to Him at the well, and the deep impression produced on the inhabitants of Sychar, by the proof which He gave of His omniscience, and by the wisdom and majesty of His teaching. We have viewed Him at Cana and Nazareth, evincing a power to arrest, even at a distance, the ravages of a fatal disease, and to restrain the malice and fury of His excited enemies ; and blending with the grace and tenderness of His invitations to sinners a holy displeasure against those who perversely resisted the force of religious truth.

Capernaum and its neighbourhood were now favoured with the inestimable privilege of the Redeemer's presence

and ministry.* Wherever He appeared, He shed the light of heavenly truth on the minds of men,—dispelled the gloom which had enveloped many an anxious spirit, by disclosing to it the way of reconciliation and peace,—and aroused the careless and worldly to serious reflection and earnest effort. He unfolded the deep spiritual import of the Divine precepts, and exposed the fallacy of those hopes which rested on a merely formal attention to the outward services of religion. He announced the near approach of that “kingdom of God,” to the establishment of which the Jewish nation had so long looked forward; but He affirmed that it was to be a spiritual dominion, and, like His immediate forerunner, He enjoined *repentance* as necessary to prepare men to enjoy its blessings. One of the evangelists has given us the following compendious statement of this period of the Redeemer’s ministry, and of the leading topics on which He dwelt:—“Now after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the Gospel of the kingdom of God, and saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the Gospel.”† No countenance was given by our Lord, from the very first, to those low and earthly views of the Messiah’s reign which many of the Jews entertained. The deliverance which He proclaimed was the rescue of the human spirit from the bondage of iniquity, and its introduction to a region of heavenly light and purity. The blessings which He offered to man were those of reconciliation to God, and a new spiritual life, developing itself in ardent aspirations after holiness, in the desire of humble communion with the Most High, in a love of

* Matthew iv. 13—16. † Mark i. 14, 15: see also Matthew iv. 17.

peace, and in unaffected benignity and kindness. He sought to awaken in every mind the consciousness of spiritual need,—to call forth a deep feeling of personal sinfulness. He directed every man to look into the recesses of his own heart, and to remember with shame and sorrow his own secret violations of the Divine laws. He called upon all who heard Him to renounce every cherished iniquity, to turn away from every forbidden path, and to prostrate themselves before God, in the lowly confession of their guilt. And then He held forth to the troubled and anxious spirit the offer of pardon, and exhibited the moral loveliness of that form of character which He would impart to every believer in Him. The ministry of the Redeemer was *impressive* and *heart-searching*: it abounded in powerful appeals to the conscience, and disclosed the fearful guilt of those forms of sin which man would pass over as trifling and insignificant. But it was also *condescending* and *gracious*: it revealed the pitying love of God to man, declared His willingness to hear the prayer of humility and faith, and encouraged the exercise even of child-like confidence in our approaches to Him.

The appearance of our Lord as a public Teacher was also distinguished by acts of power and love, which attested His claims, and diffused around Him happiness and joy. His touch gave health and vigour to the languid frame, and arrested the progress of diseases which had baffled all the attempts of medical skill. He calmed the agitation, and dissipated the gloom, of many an affectionate heart that had watched with painful interest the sufferings of an endeared relative, and had shrunk from the impending stroke of bereavement. He

rescued the victims of Satanic cruelty from that power which had tyrannised over their bodies, and controlled the actings of their minds. His path was one of light and blessing; wherever He came, the reign of sorrow was invaded; and rays of hope and joy beamed upon the wretched and disconsolate. Often was He surrounded with the diversified forms of human suffering; and a healing and life-imparting virtue went forth from Him, which changed the scene of sorrow and mourning into one of gladness and holy triumph.*

Soon after our Lord had gone from Nazareth to Capernaum, He called four of His disciples to leave their secular engagements that they might be in constant attendance upon Himself. Peter and Andrew were the first who were thus distinguished. These individuals had already acknowledged His claims, and had accompanied Him in some of His earliest journeys; but they had returned to their usual occupation, and were now fishing on the sea of Galilee. As the Redeemer walked along the shore, He saw them casting a net into the sea, and said to them, "Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men." This was enough: they well knew the dignity and power of Him who addressed them, and without hesitation or delay "they left their nets, and followed Him." A higher vocation was now before them; and often, in subsequent years, while they were engaged in their arduous toils as ambassadors for Christ, they must have reflected with comfort and joy on the promise of the Saviour, that He would use them as His instruments in gathering men to Himself, to enjoy the blessings of His grace.† James and John, the sons

* Matthew iv. 23, 24. † Matthew iv. 18—20; Mark i. 16—18.

of Zebedee, were next called to be the constant companions of our Lord. They were in a fishing-vessel with their father and his hired servants, mending their nets; and the Saviour, as He walked along the shore, attended by Peter and Andrew, called them also to be with Him, and they "immediately left the ship and their father, and followed Him."* A beautiful example of entire confidence in the Redeemer, and of unhesitating obedience to His will, is thus presented to us. Imperfect as the views of these disciples now were, they evinced at least a simple faith in the claims of the Lord Jesus, and a grateful love which caused them to prefer attendance upon Him to every secular employment.

Two of the sacred historians have given us a connected narrative of the transactions of one Sabbath, which our Lord, at this time, spent in Capernaum.† According to His established custom, He went into the synagogue, and taught the people who were there assembled. His instructions and warnings were ever marked by great authority and power; and on this occasion, as on many others, they produced a deep impression on all who were present. One of the evangelists has observed, in relation to the effect of our Lord's discourse, that the people "were astonished at His doctrine, for His word was with power;"‡ while the other has spoken of the contrast which they perceived between the earnest and authoritative expositions of our Lord, and the insipid and powerless teaching of the scribes who usually addressed them.§ But, on this day,

* Matthew iv. 21, 22; Mark i. 19, 20.

† Mark i. 21—31; Luke iv. 31—39. ‡ Luke iv. 32.

§ Mark i. 22.

there was in the synagogue a man possessed by an unclean demon; and that foul spirit, agitated and alarmed by the presence of One whose purity was without a stain, and whose control extended to the invisible world, cried out, "Let us alone; what have we to do with Thee, Thou Jesus of Nazareth? art Thou come to destroy us? I know Thee who Thou art, the Holy One of God." Here was a strange and exciting spectacle. God had permitted one of those spirits of wickedness, to whose malignant efforts against the human race we have already adverted, to exercise a fearful power over the individual in question, using his mind and his organs of speech to convey his own sentiments, and convulsing at intervals his entire frame. A strange terror fell upon this spirit when he came into the presence of the Saviour; and, constrained by this feeling, he acknowledged the unearthly purity of Him who now appeared among men. But Jesus scorned to receive praise from such a quarter. He came to overthrow the empire of Satan, and to rescue men from their captivity to him; nor could any acknowledgment of His dignity and power, on the part of these malignant spirits, induce Him to tolerate their reign. With calm majesty He addressed the impure demon, and said, "Hold thy peace, and come out of him." The eyes of all were fixed upon the unhappy man when the Saviour uttered this word of power; and, in the presence of them all, the spirit put forth a last convulsive effort on the man whom he had possessed, and then yielded, though reluctantly, to our Lord's command, and came out of him, and left him tranquil and composed. The utmost astonishment pervaded the assembly; and one general

exclamation burst forth, “What a word is this! for with authority and power He commandeth the unclean spirits, and they come out.”*

Having left the synagogue, our Lord proceeded to the house of Peter, accompanied by that disciple and the three others whom He had called to be His attendants. Here a new occasion presented itself for the display of His unbounded power and condescending love. The mother of Peter’s wife lay sick of a violent fever; and upon His entering the house, they earnestly besought Him to interpose on her behalf. Without hesitation He acceded to their request; and, coming to her bed, He stood over her, took her by the hand, and by a word restored her to health. Her cure was both instantaneous and complete; so that, instead of recoveringing her strength by a slow and gradual process, she immediately “arose and ministered unto them.”†

So great was the impression produced by these displays of the Redeemer’s power, that when the sun had set, and the Sabbath was consequently at an end, the inhabitants of Capernaum generally brought to Him their afflicted relatives and friends, that He might heal them all.‡ One of the evangelists has this striking remark: “And all the city was gathered together at the door.”§ Universal attention was aroused; and while the sick and dying hailed the presence of One who could immediately restore them, multitudes crowded to the house of Peter to witness the impressive spectacle,

* Mark i. 23—27; Luke iv. 33—36.

† Mark i. 29—31; Luke iv. 38, 39; Matthew viii. 14, 15.

‡ Mark i. 32; Luke iv. 40; Matthew viii. 16.

§ Mark i. 33.

— to behold the great Teacher of Israel instantly removing acute diseases, and raising up those who had languished under slow and wasting maladies. Nor did the Redeemer disappoint their expectations. He came forth to bless; and with simple dignity, as possessing in Himself infinite resources, He “laid His hands on every one of them, and healed them,” and by His word of power He dismissed infernal spirits from those whom they had tormented.* It is delightful to dwell upon this scene as illustrating the *diffusive benevolence* of the Redeemer, as well as His *resistless power*. He rejected no one who was brought to Him; He withheld not His sympathy from any case of human suffering; but while He deeply felt in His own spirit the woes which sin had brought upon our race,† He put forth His unbounded energy to communicate to all the freshness and glow of health, and to diffuse around Him universal cheerfulness and joy.

Such were the engagements of one Sabbath which the Redeemer spent on earth; and such the acts of blessing by which the succeeding evening was marked. The following morning presents Him to our view under another aspect. We have to contemplate Him rising a great while before day, going forth to a solitary place, and praying.‡ He wished, as man, to hold undisturbed communion with the Father; and He designed, also, to set an example to His people, to blend *retired devotion* with the *activities* of public life. In everything but sin was the Redeemer made like unto us, His brethren; and as we trace His footsteps, we should gratefully reflect,

* Mark i. 34; Luke iv. 40, 41; Matthew viii. 16.

† Matthew viii. 17.

‡ Mark i. 35.

that He has left us a pattern of perfect obedience, of uniform devotion, and of constant purity and love. The disciples whom He had chosen to be with Him followed Him, after some hours, to the place of His retirement, and stated to Him the earnest and universal desire of the people of Capernaum, that He would remain among them;* and many of the inhabitants of that city came to Him in person, and entreated Him not to leave them.† But the Saviour declared to them, that His mission was not limited to a single place,—that it was a part of that gracious plan which He came to execute, that He should “preach the kingdom of God to other cities,” and perform in them His works of power and love. In accordance with this declaration, He now made a circuit through the towns of Galilee, preaching in their synagogues, healing the afflicted, controlling the malice of evil spirits, and scattering blessings wherever He appeared.‡

The fame of the Lord Jesus, as an illustrious Teacher, and one possessing unlimited power to remove diseases, was now diffused, not only throughout Galilee, but through Judæa, and Decapolis, and the region beyond Jordan, and the whole of Syria. Multitudes flocked to Him from all these districts, to listen to His words, and to witness His miracles, or themselves to share in the blessings which He imparted to the afflicted and sorrowful.§ It was when surrounded with such a concourse, that our Lord went up into a mountain in the neighbourhood of Capernaum, and delivered that impressive

* Mark i. 36, 37.

† Luke iv. 42.

‡ Mark i. 38, 39; Luke iv. 43, 44; Matthew iv. 23.

§ Matthew iv. 24, 25.

discourse which has been recorded by St. Matthew.* Without entering upon a formal exposition of this discourse, we may properly advert to some of its leading features, and to the light which it sheds on the character and claims of the Saviour Himself. It was distinguished by the *authoritative* manner in which the Redeemer spoke. He addressed His disciples and the multitude, as the Lawgiver of mankind; as invested with power to inculcate precepts which should bind the consciences of men; and as being Himself the exalted Ruler, to whom it would at last belong to apply judicially the principles which He affirmed, and to dispense the rewards and punishments of the future life. It was distinguished by the lofty views which it afforded of the *spirituality* of religion. In delineating the form of character which is the object of the Divine complacency, and to which the promise of happiness belongs, the Redeemer gave prominence to those inward dispositions which lead men away from outward pomp and show to seek communion with God, as the only Fountain of blessing, the only Giver of peace, and purity, and joy. But it was equally distinguished by the earnest manner in which the *practical development* of spiritual feeling, and the active duties of a pious life, were set forth and inculcated. The Saviour distinctly taught His people that they were to be "the salt of the earth," counteracting the moral corruption which prevails in the mass of mankind, and diffusing around them a purifying and preserving influence. He showed them that if "light" had been imparted to them from above, causing them to take pleasure in heavenly

* Matthew v., vi., vii.

truth, and to reflect the image of their Father and their God, that light should shine forth to all around them in a course of holy obedience. In guarding many of the great precepts of the law against the false glosses which had been put upon them by the Jewish scribes, our Lord clearly unfolded their deep spirituality and their large extent. He required that the *heart* should itself become the seat of *purity* and *love*, so that no unchaste desire or resentful feeling should be cherished there. He called upon men to maintain *an habitual and profound regard to God*; realising His presence with them as the Searcher of the heart, acknowledging His providential government as well as His moral administration, and contemplating His character as the model of all that is pure, benevolent, and lovely. He charged them to seek the approbation of God, and to wait upon Him for blessing, in all their religious duties, instead of endeavouring to commend themselves to the notice and admiration of their fellow-men. He dwelt, in particular, on the subject of *prayer*, and showed what are the petitions which we should present to our Father in heaven, and what the state of mind in which we should approach His throne. He warned men against *the love of the world*, as one of the most insidious and destructive forms of evil; and He unfolded the care of God over His people, to sustain their minds under the trials of life, and to enable them to resist the assaults of *worldly anxiety*. Beautifully did the tenderness of the Saviour's character blend itself with His fidelity and His utter hatred to sin, in this portion of His discourse. While He declared, with peculiar emphasis, "Ye cannot serve God and mammon," He directed the humble and devout

to reflect, that they were not inhabitants of a forsaken and fatherless world; that the eye of God was ever upon them; and that all things really necessary, or even conducive to their welfare, should be vouchsafed to them by His bounty. After alluding to the circumstances of man, as requiring a constant supply of food and raiment, He added, with peculiar beauty and grace, "Your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you."* The Saviour then referred to the fearful evil of censoriousness. He well knew that the selfishness of the human heart often manifests itself in its readiness to magnify the faults of others, and harshly to condemn them; and He warned the assembled multitudes, that such a temper was in the highest degree inconsistent with the spirit of His religion, and offensive to the God of perfect holiness and love. He dwelt on the willingness of our Father in heaven to impart to us every spiritual blessing, and invited all who heard Him to seek with earnestness the offered salvation. Other topics of deep interest were adverted to by our Lord, and maxims of great simplicity and pre-eminent wisdom were laid down by Him. But as He approached the close of His discourse, a peculiar solemnity attached to all His words, and He claimed for Himself *an unearthly dignity and power*. He carried forward the minds of His hearers to the consummation of this world's history; and though He now stood before them in outward lowliness, He declared that He should at last occupy the throne of judgment, and decide the eternal state of every human

* Matthew vi. 32, 33.

being; not according to his outward profession, but his real character and conduct: "Many will say to Me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Thy Name? and in Thy Name have cast out devils? and in Thy Name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from Me, ye that work iniquity."^{*}

We cannot wonder that such a discourse produced a deep impression on all who heard it.[†] The simple, distinct, and earnest manner, in which great religious truths were announced,—the light which was shed upon the character and government of God,—the heart-searching fidelity with which the cherished sins of men were detected and reprobated,—the unearthly purity of that form of character which was exhibited and enforced,—and the repeated intimations of the mysterious personal dignity of the great Teacher Himself,—could scarcely fail to affect every thoughtful mind. One sentiment must have pervaded that assembly,—that the Prophet who could so address them, and whose claims were supported by such works of power, was ineffably great and august; and that the religion which He taught, demanded the profound attention of every human mind.

When the Saviour had descended from the mountain, on which He delivered this discourse, He was followed by the multitude, who were still eager to catch His words, and to behold His miracles.[‡] It was soon after this, as He entered one of the towns in the neighbourhood, that He was accosted by a leprous man, who

* Matthew vii. 22, 23. † Matthew vii. 28, 29.

‡ Matthew viii. 1.

came to Him, and, kneeling down with lowly reverence before Him, said, “Lord, if Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean.” This was the language, not of doubt as to the willingness of the Redeemer to restore health to his diseased frame, but rather of simple and unwavering confidence in His almighty energy. The sentiment of the leper was, that it was only for our Lord to *will it*, and the fearful malady with which he had been afflicted, and which was incurable by ordinary means, would at once give place to soundness and vigour. And the reply of our Lord honoured the faith which was thus reposed in Himself. He put forth His hand, and, touching the leper, said to him, “I will; be thou clean,” and “immediately the leprosy departed from him.”* The manner of our Lord on this and similar occasions, is well deserving of our serious regard. Had His apostles, in subsequent days, been appealed to, as possessing in themselves the power to cure inveterate diseases by a touch or a word, they would at once have disclaimed that power, and referred to an energy above them,—even the energy of Him whose name they were commissioned to proclaim. But Jesus accepted this expression of faith in His inherent dignity and unlimited resources. He confirmed the sentiment to which the leper gave utterance; and His simple and emphatic declaration, “I will, be thou clean,” stands as the avowal of a resistless power, accompanying in every instance the actings of His will.

The loftiness of the Redeemer’s claims was still further illustrated by a circumstance which occurred soon after the incident that we have now considered. He had continued His public ministry, blending with it

* Matthew viii. 2—4; Mark i. 40—44; Luke v. 12—14.

retirement for the purpose of devout and unbroken communion with the Father;* and, after some time, He returned to Capernaum, as the place of His ordinary residence. As soon as it was generally known that the illustrious Teacher had arrived, many crowded to the house in which He usually dwelt, so that "there was no room to receive them; no, not so much as about the door."† Among the company assembled to listen to His discourse were several "Pharisees and doctors of the law," from Jerusalem, and Judæa, and many of the towns of Galilee, who had come to Capernaum to await our Lord's arrival.‡ These sat near Him, and marked with eager attention all that He said and did. In several cases which were brought before Him, the Redeemer displayed His power to heal;§ and, at length, a man suffering from paralysis, who earnestly desired to be introduced to His notice, was carried towards the house by four persons, who themselves had the greatest confidence in the Saviour's power and love. Being unable to bring him into the house in the ordinary way, in consequence of the press, they removed a portion of the roof, and let down the couch on which he lay, into the midst before Jesus. The Saviour beheld in this an evidence of the strength of their faith in Himself; and perceiving, also, that the afflicted man was troubled in spirit by the consciousness of his sins, said to him, in the presence of them all, "Son, thy sins are forgiven thee." These words were uttered by our Lord with a distinctness and energy which showed that He claimed the right to *bestow* forgiveness, and authoritatively to

* Luke v. 15, 16.

† Mark ii. 1, 2.

‡ Luke v. 17.

§ Luke v. 17, last clause.

assure the human spirit of its acceptance. The surprise of the Pharisees and scribes was called forth, and they began to reason within themselves, "Who is this which speaketh blasphemies? Who can forgive sins, but God alone?" But the Saviour desired them to reflect, whether the lofty claim which He had made was not fully sustained by the energy which He possessed in Himself, and which He was just about to put forth, to communicate strength to the palsied frame. Then, to establish His right to forgive sins, even amidst the lowliness of His earthly state, He said to the paralytic before Him, "Arise, take up thy couch, and go unto thine house." Instantly new vigour pervaded his helpless body; and, rising up before them all, he took up his couch and went forth, leaving on the minds of the assembly an impression of utter astonishment at the unearthly dignity and infinite resources of Him who had appeared among them. Here was a miracle, expressly intended to show that to Him it belonged to pardon transgressions, and to heal the broken spirit. Here was a proof, that even while His glory was veiled in that "form of a servant" which He assumed for our redemption, He retained the prerogatives of His higher and eternal nature.*

Within a few days after this, as our Lord walked by the sea-shore, He called Matthew, or Levi, to become one of His constant attendants. We have already had occasion to refer to the promptitude with which Peter, and Andrew, and the two sons of Zebedee, obeyed the Redeemer's call to follow Him; and the same features distinguished the conduct of Matthew, though, in all probability, his worldly circumstances were far superior

* Matthew ix. 2—8; Mark ii. 3—12; Luke v. 18—26.

to theirs. He belonged to the class of officers termed publicans, who farmed the tribute of the Roman government. These persons were greatly disliked by the people generally, on account of their connexion with a foreign power; but many of them appear to have been respectable and influential. As the Redeemer passed along, He saw Matthew engaged in the receipt of the tribute due to him, and addressed him as He had done the other disciples who now waited upon Him,—“Follow Me.” Instantly, and without hesitation, Matthew “rose up, left all, and followed Him.”* He did not stay to inquire what bearing such a course would have on his worldly interests, or whether it might not be prudent for him first to make some arrangements to guard against a loss of property. It was enough that the great Teacher, to whose discourses he had so often listened, and whose works of power he had witnessed, addressed to him such a call. The path of duty was plain and obvious; and, looking for grace from on high, he at once entered upon it.

The satisfaction with which this disciple renounced the gains of his secular employment, that he might become one of the immediate companions of the Redeemer, is shown by another pleasing and instructive fact. He made for our Lord “a great feast in his own house,” to which he invited many of those with whom he had been accustomed to mingle in the transactions of business. All the circumstances of the case seem to indicate, that he did this in order to avow before them all the resolution which he had formed,—to obey the gracious command of the Saviour, to follow Him; and

* Matthew ix. 9; Mark ii. 13, 14; Luke v. 27, 28.

in order, also, to introduce them to personal intercourse with that illustrious Teacher, that they might observe the developments of His pure and benignant character, and listen to the maxims of heavenly wisdom which, in the social circle, fell from His lips. The Redeemer accepted the invitation. He did not, with Pharisaic haughtiness, stand aloof from the assembled company, because many of them were engaged in collecting the Roman tribute, and some had lived in guilty neglect of God; but He came among them to inculcate the great truths of religion, and to point out to every wanderer the path of salvation and peace. A beautiful illustration of our Lord's condescending goodness was afforded in the course of the evening. Some of the scribes and Pharisees who saw Him at this entertainment, upbraided His disciples with it, and said to them, "How is it that He eateth and drinketh with publicans and sinners?" The Saviour immediately replied to them, "They that are whole need not a physician, but they that are sick. I came not to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance."* It is scarcely possible to conceive of words more replete with heavenly wisdom and grace than these. This declaration of our Lord showed, that He did not mingle with the ungodly, to sanction their principles or imbibe their spirit, but rather to exert upon their minds a corrective and salutary influence, and by His faithful and earnest addresses to lead them back to God. And while He thus guarded His conduct against any injurious misapprehension, He affirmed the encouraging truth,—that the recovery of the fallen was the great object of His mission to our world. It was for the very purpose of

* Luke v. 29—32; Mark ii. 15—17.

restoring the guilty and polluted to peace and holiness, that He appeared among men; and it was for this, that He endured at last the agonies of Gethsemane, and poured out His life on the accursed tree. Instructive and beautiful was the contrast, which was presented on this occasion, between the spirit of our Lord and that of the Pharisaic sect. They, confiding in their outward privileges, and the exactness with which they observed the ceremonial law, stood aloof from "publicans and sinners," and regarded them with lofty disdain; but our Lord, though possessed of a purity which shrunk from any compromise with sin, condescendingly drew near to the ignorant and guilty, to shed the light of truth upon their minds, and to lead them to repentance and salvation.

CHAPTER VI.

THE REDEEMER'S VISIT TO JERUSALEM AT THE SECOND
PASSEOVER.—HIS RETURN TO GALILEE.—HIS MIRACLES
AND TEACHING AT CAPERNAUM AND NAIN.—HIS
SECOND GENERAL CIRCUIT OF GALILEE.

As the feast of the passover drew near, our Lord went up to Jerusalem, to participate in its solemnities.* This visit to the metropolis was rendered memorable, both by the proof which He gave of His power to remove in an instant the most inveterate maladies, and by the

* John v. 1.

impressive manner in which He affirmed His own lofty claims, even in the presence of His malignant enemies.

There was at that time, in Jerusalem, a pool, called in the Hebrew language Bethesda, or "the house of mercy," around which were five porticoes, or covered walks. These porticoes presented a melancholy spectacle of human suffering. They were crowded with persons labouring under various diseases, and especially with the blind, the lame, and the paralytic. To honour, as we have reason to believe, the eventful period of the Redeemer's manifestation on earth, and to illustrate and confirm important truths bearing on His government of our world, God had been pleased to give, at intervals, a healing virtue to the waters of this pool, by means of angelic agency. But the benefit was restricted to the individual who *first* availed himself of them, after the healing virtue had been imparted; and in his case, whatever might be the nature, or the obduracy, of his disease, a perfect cure was effected.* The supernatural character of the cures wrought at this pool was evinced by this restriction, as well as by the fact, that the same means was rendered effectual to impart sight to the blind, and to give renewed energy to the impotent and disabled. Here was the proof of an agency higher than that of man, and the operations of which the human mind cannot fully trace. Here, too, was an evidence that God has not forgotten to be gracious; that He looks compassionately on the outward sufferings of His creatures, though He may reserve to Himself the time and circumstances of their mitigation and removal. The Redeemer, on this visit to Jerusalem, came to Bethesda;

* John v. 2—4.

and, among the afflicted persons assembled there, He beheld one who, during thirty-eight years, had laboured under an almost total loss of strength. Looking upon him with interest and pity, as one whose sufferings had been greatly protracted, the Saviour said to him, "Wilt thou be made whole?" The impotent man replied, "Sir, I have no man, when the water is troubled, to put me into the pool: but while I am coming, another steppeth down before me." A ray of hope, perhaps, now darted across his mind, that the individual who had so kindly addressed him, would wait there until the water should again be moved, and plunge him into the healing bath. But he was in the presence of the Giver of life, whose power to save was not limited to particular seasons, and whose comprehensive love welcomed every sufferer, and disclosed to every troubled mind the way of deliverance and peace. Jesus said to him, "Rise, take up thy bed, and walk." Immediately he felt within himself new life and energy; and, taking up his bed, he walked before them all,—a proof of the infinite resources of the distinguished Teacher who appeared among them.*

The Saviour did not, however, remain there to attract the gaze of the assembled multitude. He retired from the pool of Bethesda; and when, afterwards, He met the individual whom He had restored to health, in the temple, He said to him, in order to awaken religious feeling in relation to the mercy which he had experienced, "Sin no more, lest a worse thing come upon thee."†

It was on the Sabbath that this miracle was per-

* John v. 5—9.

† John v. 13, 14.

formed; and when some of the Jews beheld the restored man carrying his bed, they objected to him that such an action was not lawful on the day of sacred rest. He pleaded the explicit command of the unknown Person who had made him whole; and when, subsequently, he found that it was Jesus, the Prophet of Galilee, to whom he was indebted for his recovered vigour, he delayed not to inform them of this, expecting, probably, that they would be induced to listen to His teaching with profound attention.* But their minds, already prejudiced against the Saviour, were not disposed calmly to inquire into the evidences of His mission; and they gladly seized on the circumstance, that He had healed a man on the Sabbath, and had instructed him to carry his bed, as affording matter of grave accusation against Him. They even sought to kill Him, thinking to justify such an act by imputing to Him a bold and open violation of the Sabbath rest. But the Redeemer fearlessly declared to them His own unearthly glory, and carried forward their minds to the period of His final manifestation as the Dispenser of eternal happiness and woe. He adverted to the charge which they had alleged against Him, and justified the exertion of His inherent and almighty power on the Sabbath, by reminding them, that the energy of the Father is continually put forth, to uphold the universal frame of nature, and maintain its processes. "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work." Such a declaration only inflamed the indignation of the Jews. Instead of being subdued to reverence and awe by the claim which He now advanced, of a peculiar relation to the Father, and of a power which,

* John v. 10—15.

like His, is all-pervading and resistless, they sought the more to kill Him, because He had put forth such a claim, and had thus "made himself equal with God."* But the Saviour affirmed His personal dignity, and official eminence, with yet greater distinctness and power. He spoke of Himself, at considerable length, as THE Son,—the Object of the Father's unbounded complacency, and all whose acts were in perfect harmony with His. He declared that yet loftier and more affecting proofs should be given to them of His almighty energy, intimating that He would even recall the dead from the silence of the tomb. He affirmed, that to Himself the throne of universal judgment had been assigned by the Eternal Father, "that all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father." He pointed out the connexion between a cordial reception of Himself and everlasting life; and He spoke of that solemn day, when "all that are in the graves should hear His voice, and should come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation."†

We can easily imagine, with what feelings many who stood around our Lord would listen to these declarations, uttered by One who appeared among them in the lowliness of ordinary manhood. But every serious and earnest mind would immediately inquire into the evidence by which His claims were supported; and to this our Lord Himself proceeded to advert. Acknowledging that if they had only His own affirmation, unsustained by other proofs, they might, indeed, hesitate to receive it, He reminded them of the testimony

* John v. 16—18.

† John v. 19—30.

which John had borne to His character and work,—He appealed to His own acts of power, which impressed on all His teaching the seal of Divine authority,—He referred to the express attestation of the Father, given to Him at His baptism,—and He instructed them to “search the Scriptures,” since all His announcements and professions were in accordance with the intimations which they contained of the Messiah’s dignity and power. But while He thus set forth the leading evidences of His own transcendent glory, He knew that many whom He addressed were not in a state of mind candidly to inquire into them. The love of worldly reputation came into conflict with their serious convictions and feelings, and triumphed over them. They were not prepared to encounter the ridicule and scorn of those around them, by avowing themselves the followers of a Divine Redeemer, who yet came in lowliness and sorrow, and who had even foretold His own rejection and death. The Saviour charged it upon their consciences, that, notwithstanding all their pretensions to piety, they were destitute of love to God; and appealed to them with heart-searching fidelity, “How can ye believe, who receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour that cometh from God only?”*

It was about a week after this, and probably in the neighbourhood of Jerusalem, that a circumstance occurred which led the Redeemer to affirm some great principles relative to the Sabbath institution, and to blend with them instructive allusions to His personal dignity. He had gone on the Sabbath, with His disciples, through some corn-fields; and they, under the pressure of hunger,

* John v. 31—47.

had plucked and eaten a few of the ears of corn. The Pharisees complained of this, and upbraided Him with having permitted and sanctioned a violation of the holy Sabbath.* They did not reflect on His disciples as having injured the property of others; since it was admitted that their conduct, considered merely in itself, was allowable and proper.† The charge which they alleged was, that it was inconsistent with the sacred character of the day. But our Lord, without hesitation, justified His disciples; and laid down, in His reply to the Pharisees, three important principles. He first adverted to the circumstances which had transpired as involving a case of *necessity*; since it was only to satisfy the demands of hunger that His disciples had plucked the ears of corn. This principle He illustrated by appealing to the case of David, who, under the pressure of extreme necessity, had even eaten the shew-bread that had just been removed from the sanctuary, and had given it to his companions, although, in ordinary cases, only the priests themselves were permitted to make use of this hallowed food.‡ But then He advanced to higher ground, and affirmed, that just as they who ministered in the temple of God were obliged on the Sabbath to perform many duties which seemed inconsistent with the rest proper to that day, but which were justified by the very nature of their office, and by the sacred character of the temple-worship, so they who were in personal attendance upon Himself might lawfully perform the acts which that

* Matthew xii. 1, 2; Mark ii. 23, 24; Luke vi. 1, 2.

† This is obvious from Deuteronomy xxiii. 25.

‡ Matthew xii. 3, 4; Mark ii. 25, 26; Luke vi. 3, 4.

attendance rendered necessary. This argument necessarily implied His own inherent dignity; and the Saviour, to show yet more clearly its bearing and force, added, “But I say unto you, That in this place is One greater than the temple.” Aware, as He was, of the profound reverence with which His hearers regarded the temple as the house of God, and Himself affirming the peculiar sacredness of the duty of ministering among its beautiful and instructive symbols, He claimed to be Himself higher and more glorious than that holy place, and declared, that they who waited upon Him were engaged in a nobler service than the priests of the ancient sanctuary.* He then adverted to a third consideration,—that the Sabbath was designed to bless man; that in all our reasonings respecting it, we are to view it as an institution eminently benignant and attractive, securing to the weary rest from oppressive toil, and pouring the light of religious truth around the harassed and sorrowful spirit; and that such is the character of the Divine government, that we are not to press any positive precept so as to involve cruelty to man, or subject him to utter exhaustion.† And then He closed the conversation with the remarkable words, “The Son of man is Lord also of the Sabbath.”‡ Such a declaration would have been altogether unseemly from the lips of any merely human prophet, since it is not for man to modify the express requirements of Jehovah; but it has peculiar propriety and force when coming from the Redeemer as THE Son manifested in our nature. He who could issue precepts, by His own authority, that

* Matthew xii. 5, 6. † Matthew xii. 7; Mark ii. 27.

‡ Mark ii. 28; Matthew xii. 8; Luke vi. 5.

should bind the consciences of men, and influence their eternal destiny,—who possessed an inherent energy, which, like that of the Father, was ever active, and to which universal nature bowed;—He could justly claim to regulate and modify the institutions of religion in order to show forth yet more clearly His essential glory, and to commemorate the facts of His mediatorial undertaking. And thus, when He had completed the work of atonement, when He had endured the last fearful anguish which came upon Him as the Substitute of our guilty race, and had risen again, to enter, as the Mediator, upon a new and glorious life, He sanctified the day of His triumph over death as the Sabbath of His people.

When the Redeemer had returned from Jerusalem to Capernaum, He was again brought into collision with the Scribes and Pharisees on the subject of the Sabbath, and was led to affirm another principle,—that works of *mercy* are proper on that day, and are, indeed, eminently suited to its holy character. He went into the synagogue; and there, a man whose right hand was withered arrested His attention. Many of the Pharisees who were present watched Him with a jealous and malignant eye, intending, if He should exert on that day His power to heal, to make this the ground of an accusation against Him. Jesus knew their thoughts, and said to the afflicted man, “Rise up, and stand forth in the midst.” Instantly he arose, and stood forth. The Pharisees then interposed, and addressing our Lord, said, “Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath-days?” The Saviour replied by asking them, “Is it lawful to do good on the Sabbath-days, or to do evil? to save life, or to kill?” They felt the force of this inquiry, perceiving

in it a reproof to themselves, for indulging, on that day which they professed to hold sacred, the purpose to bring about His death. They remained silent; and, after a pause, our Lord went on to say unto them, “What man shall there be among you, that shall have one sheep, and if it fall into a pit on the Sabbath-day, will he not lay hold on it, and lift it out? How much then is a man better than a sheep? Wherefore it is lawful to do well on the Sabbath-days.” Then, having looked round about upon them all, with mingled feelings of indignation and sorrow, He said to the man whose hand was withered, “Stretch forth thine hand.” The command was obeyed; and the Divine energy of the Redeemer, which accompanied His word, gave new life and vigour to the hand which had been utterly powerless, and restored it to perfect health. The Pharisees left the synagogue, irritated by the refutation of their objection, and confounded by the majesty of the Saviour’s acts: and they immediately began to consult with the Herodians in what way they might effect the destruction of the illustrious Prophet.*

Aware of the malignant purpose which they had formed, our Lord now retired with His disciples to the sea; but He was followed by “a great multitude from Galilee, and from Judæa, and from Jerusalem, and from Idumæa, and from beyond Jordan,” and from the neighbourhood of Tyre and Sidon.† These were attracted by the fame of His miracles; and many among them who were themselves afflicted, or who had mourned over the illness of endeared relatives, came to Him to seek the

* Matthew xii. 9—14; Mark iii. 1—6; Luke vi. 6—11.

† Mark iii. 7, 8.

interpositions of His grace and power. An impressive scene is placed before us by the sacred historians who have spoken of this period of the Redeemer's ministry. The great Teacher stood surrounded by the diversified forms of human suffering; and by a touch or a word He removed them all. The sick and wretched crowded around Him, and "pressed upon Him to touch Him," as the certain means of again enjoying the freshness and glow of health. They who had pined under the wasting and torturing influence of demons, were rescued by Him; and these impure spirits fell down before Him, acknowledging with alarm and terror His more than human glory, but restrained from enlarging on this theme by His own authoritative charge.* The Saviour's entire bearing, on this occasion, revealed His inherent dignity, and showed that He possessed within Himself a power which could control universal nature; but it evinced, also, His *gentleness* and His deep *sympathy* with man. He felt the woes of others; His compassionate heart was moved by the sight of the accumulated sorrows of our race; and while He imparted health to the diseased body, He sustained and cheered the fainting spirit, bending under the weight of its guilt, and conscious of its feebleness and destitution. With great propriety and beauty one of the sacred historians has quoted the prediction of Isaiah as now fulfilled in Him:—"Behold my Servant, whom I have chosen; my Beloved, in whom my soul is well pleased: I will put my Spirit upon Him, and He shall show judgment to the Gentiles. He shall not strive, nor cry; neither shall any man hear His voice in the streets. A bruised reed shall He not break,

* Mark iii. 9—12; Matthew xii. 15, 16.

and smoking flax shall He not quench, till He send forth judgment unto victory. And in His name shall the Gentiles trust.”*

But the Saviour blended *retirement* with His public labours. He often withdrew, for a while, from the multitude, and even from His disciples, to some solitary place, for the purpose of holding communion with the Father. It is recorded, that about this time He went up into a mountain, apart from all His attendants, and spent the whole night in prayer to God.† This was preparatory to an important act of His administration as the Ruler of His church. For in the morning, calling unto Him His disciples, He set apart twelve of them to the high and sacred office of His *apostles*.‡ In this character they were not only to be with Him to mark in private the development of His purity and goodness, and to listen to His sayings of heavenly wisdom; but they were to go forth, at intervals, under His direction, to preach the glad tidings of the kingdom of God, and to heal diseases and cast out devils, not by any power of their own, but in His name, and as the instruments of His resistless energy.§ Thus were they prepared to be His ambassadors to the world, when the grand scheme of reconciliation should be wrought out, and the Cross should be set forth as the refuge of our fallen race, and the centre of attraction to all mankind.

While the Lord Jesus pursued His career of kindness to the afflicted, He continued to inculcate religious

* Matthew xii. 17—21: see also Isaiah xlvi. 1—4.

† Luke vi. 12.

‡ Luke vi. 13—16; Mark iii. 13—19; Matthew x. 2—4.

§ Mark iii. 14, 15.

truth with great earnestness and power. His ministry, from first to last, shed a flood of light on the character and government of God, and the duties which devolve on man. Several of the topics which He had introduced into His sermon on the mount, were repeatedly brought forward by Him in His ordinary expositions of Divine truth. He set forth, for instance, the spirituality of religion, and showed, that many whom the world would regard as unfortunate and wretched, are among the most blessed of men, as enjoying the friendship of God, and having the prospect of eternal security and joy. He enforced the practical development of every holy principle; and repeatedly called upon His people to manifest a forgiving, generous, and benevolent temper. And He exposed the fallacy of those hopes which rested on the mere profession of attachment to Himself, while His precepts were disregarded, and the heart remained polluted and worldly.*

Capernaum was still distinguished as the scene of our Lord's frequent teaching and miracles. Soon after the ordination of the twelve to the office of apostles, He returned to this town, and gave another proof of His unbounded power by healing, even at a distance, the servant of a Roman centurion. The interest of this case, which has been recorded by two of the evangelists,† arises, to a great extent, from the lofty *faith* which the centurion exercised in His resistless power, and from the honour which the Redeemer put upon that faith in the performance of the miracle. The centurion in question had evidently embraced the worship of Jehovah, to the utter renunciation of idolatry; and he had even

* Luke vi. 17—49.

† Luke vii. 1—10; Matthew viii. 5—13.

built a synagogue as an evidence of his profound regard for the truths revealed in the Jewish Scriptures. He was a man, too, of tender and strong attachments; his servant, who was now sick, was "dear unto him;" and he was deeply affected at the prospect of the fatal termination of the disease. Upon our Lord's arrival at Capernaum, he sent unto Him some of the elders of the Jews, to entreat Him to come and heal his servant. The Saviour accompanied them; but when He was not far from the house, the centurion sent other friends to Him, and afterwards came himself, to express his deep conviction that he was not worthy that One so glorious and powerful should come under his roof; and that as *he* could issue commands to his soldiers which would be immediately obeyed, even so it was only for our Lord to "speak the word," and his servant would be healed. The Saviour accepted this acknowledgment of His unlimited resources. He honoured the faith which, beneath all the lowness of His outward form, could discern His more than human dignity; and, turning to those that followed Him, He uttered the memorable words, "Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel. And I say unto you, That many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven. But the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." Then, addressing the centurion, He said, "Go thy way, and as thou hast believed, so be it done unto thee." This assurance was enough; and the centurion returning, with the friends whom he had sent forward, found his servant perfectly restored to health.

On the day after this incident,* the town of Nain, in Galilee, was favoured with a visit from our Lord, and an affecting proof of His power and love. As He approached that town, attended by His disciples and a large company of people, He met a funeral procession. It was the only son of a widow, whose remains were being carried to the grave. The mother herself followed them, together with many of the inhabitants of Nain; and her deep sorrow expressed itself in silent tears. As the Saviour drew near, He looked upon her with tender compassion, and said unto her, "Weep not." Advancing to the bier, He touched it; and they who carried the lifeless body stood still. It was a pause of solemn interest. Glorious as the miracles had been which the Redeemer had already performed, He had never yet restored any one actually dead to life. But all who had carefully observed His miracles, and had marked in how distinct and emphatic a manner He had claimed to be Himself the Agent, and not the mere instrument of a higher power, must have been convinced that He could accomplish even this,—that death itself must relax its grasp, if He uttered the command. The decisive proof of this was immediately given. Addressing the departed youth, He said, "Young man, I say unto thee, Arise:" and, instantly, he that had been dead "sat up, and began to speak." With great benignity and tenderness, our Lord turned to the widowed mother, and restored to her the son of her hope and love; while all around stood amazed at this display of His almighty energy, and exclaimed, "Surely a great Prophet is risen up among us," and "God hath visited His people."†

* Luke vii. 11.

† Luke vii. 12—16.

It was soon after this, and probably while our Lord continued at Nain, that John the Baptist, who still languished in prison, sent two of his disciples to the Saviour, to ask Him,—“Art Thou He that should come, or do we look for another?” Many reasons may be assigned why John should have had recourse to this step, without supposing that his own mind had begun to waver. He was not “a reed shaken with the wind;” and the evidence which he had received, that Jesus was indeed the long-expected Messiah, was too conclusive to render any additional confirmation necessary. But he wished, probably, that these disciples should have the proof of our Lord’s Messiahship vividly brought before their minds, and that any objection which had occurred to them should be met by conversing with the great Teacher Himself, and beholding His works of power. When the disciples of John came to our Lord, and proposed the question which their master had instructed them to put, He was surrounded by the afflicted and sorrowful; and “in that same hour He cured many of their infirmities and plagues, and of evil spirits; and unto many that were blind He gave sight.” Then, addressing the messengers of the Baptist, He said, “Go and show John again those things which ye do hear and see: the blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the Gospel preached to them. And blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in Me.”* These miracles of condescending love attested His claims to be the promised Restorer; for they impressed the seal of Divine authority on

* Luke vii. 17—23; Matthew xi. 2—6.

all His declarations, showed His control of universal nature, and evinced the deep and pure benignity which dwelt within His breast. Nor was it a consideration of trifling weight which the Redeemer urged, when He said, "The poor have the Gospel preached to them." It was in the invitations of mercy addressed by Him to the guilty and wretched, that His love to man was especially apparent; and the prophetic descriptions of the Messiah, while they contained allusions to the works of power which He should perform, set forth in the clearest and most impressive manner the condescending character of His teaching, and the message of comfort and joy which He should bring to the sorrowful and fainting spirit.*

When the messengers of John had retired, our Lord took occasion to speak to the multitude around Him of the character and mission of that distinguished prophet. Reminding them of the austerity of his life, and of the firm and faithful manner in which he had delivered his message, and reproved the sins of men, He spoke of him as superior to any prophet that had appeared before him, and as the person to whom the remarkable predictions in the closing book of the Old Testament Scriptures referred:—"Behold, I will send My messenger, and he shall prepare the way before Me: and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to His temple, even the Messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in." "Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD: and he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and

* See Isaiah xxxv. 5, 6; lxi. 1-3.

smite the earth with a curse."* With the ministry of John a new scene opened upon this world. He was the immediate harbinger of the great Deliverer Himself; and the light of his teaching was the dawn that introduced the rising of "the Sun of righteousness," to scatter every mist of error, and to reveal to every earnest and anxious mind the way of salvation and peace.†

A series of mournful reflections now crowded upon the mind of the compassionate Redeemer. He thought of the perverseness of many of the men of that generation, and especially of the Pharisees and Scribes; that they were equally unmoved by the teaching of John, and by His own discourses and miracles. Some of them even said of the prophet of the wilderness, whose manners were rigid and austere, "He hath a devil;" while of Himself, who mingled with men in the ordinary engagements of life, and came into the social circle to give a right and spiritual direction to its cheerful intercourse, they said, "Behold a gluttonous man, and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners."‡ So ready is the human mind to cavil at any circumstance affecting a religious teacher which seems open to objection, and to dismiss, without serious and earnest inquiry, the truths which are pressed upon its attention. But the Redeemer thought, also, of multitudes whose interest had been awakened by His miracles, and who had often hung on His lips with apparent eagerness, but who had never yielded to their religious convictions, or bowed before God in lowly penitence. He reflected, in particular, on the moral state of those cities near the sea of

* Matthew xi. 7—11, 14; Luke vii. 24—27: see also Malachi iii. 1; iv. 5, 6. † Matthew xi. 12, 13.

‡ Matthew xi. 16—19; Luke vii. 31—35.

Galilee, which had been favoured so largely with His personal labours, but which still continued impenitent and careless. He thought of Bethsaida, of Chorazin, and especially of Capernaum; and, with a sorrowful spirit, but one to which the claims of holiness and truth were inexpressibly dear, He declared the fearful and aggravated ruin which must fall upon them, as having neglected and abused their distinguished privileges.*

But then He looked round with complacency on His sincere and devoted followers, destitute, as they were, of worldly influence, and high literary culture; and addressing the Father, He uttered these words of profound and momentous truth:—"I thank Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in Thy sight."† It was to Him a source of satisfaction, that the beauty and excellence of the doctrines which He taught were disclosed, not to those who gloried in the vigour of their intellectual powers, but rather to the humble and docile; and that the charge of unfolding those doctrines to the world, when He should have completed the work of atonement, was confided to men whom the great ones of the earth would regard as powerless and insignificant.

And now the Redeemer, addressing those who stood around Him, declared, in the most emphatic manner, His mysterious personal dignity, and the universal sovereignty with which He was invested; offering Himself, at the same time, to every sorrowful and burdened spirit, as the Giver of inward peace. "All

* Matthew xi. 20—24.

† Matthew xi. 25, 26.

things are delivered unto Me of My Father: and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal Him. Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For My yoke is easy, and My burden is light.”* Beautiful and instructive is the combination of thought which is here presented to us. The glory of the Redeemer’s person, though it transcends the loftiest efforts of our minds, need not repel us from Him. His very dignity as THE SON, while it qualifies Him to sway the sceptre of the universe, assures us that He is an all-sufficient Saviour to those who come to Him. Is the spirit of man weary and exhausted with its inward agitation,—worn down with self-reproach, and the anticipation of a coming judgment?—is it ready to sink and faint under the burden of its guilt? Jesus offers to release it from its load, to cheer it with the assurance of pardon, and to impart to it the freshness of spiritual health. But He requires of all who thus come unto Him for deliverance and peace, that they should bow to His government, follow His instructions, and engage in His service. He claims to exercise over the human spirit a powerful and gracious sway; one which shall conform it to universal holiness, give stability to its peace and comfort, and prepare it to dwell at last amidst the glories of His presence above.

The condescension of our Lord, and His readiness to receive and acknowledge every returning sinner, were

* Matthew xi. 27—30.

beautifully illustrated by a circumstance which occurred very soon after He had uttered these declarations. One of the Pharisees requested Him to sup with him; and the Saviour accepted the invitation, and accompanied him to his house. The Pharisee, however, omitted to pay to Him the marks of respect which were usually shown to a distinguished guest; and our Lord sat down among the company, the object rather of suspicion, than of sincere and warm attachment. But a woman, whose heart had been touched by His ministry, and who had relied on the promises of pardon which He held forth to the contrite spirit, came to express her gratitude to Him through whom she had found rest and peace. She "brought," as the sacred historian relates, "an alabaster box of ointment, and stood at His feet behind Him weeping, and began to wash His feet with tears, and did wipe them with the hairs of her head, and kissed His feet, and anointed them with the ointment." The Pharisee, who knew that her life had not been consistent and pure, said within himself, in the haughty spirit of his sect, "This man, if he were a prophet, would have known who and what manner of woman this is that toucheth him: for she is a sinner." The Saviour, aware of the thoughts which were passing in his mind, said to him, "Simon, I have somewhat to say unto thee." He replied, "Master, say on." Our Lord continued:—"There was a certain creditor which had two debtors: the one owed five hundred pence, and the other fifty. And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both. Tell me therefore, which of them will love him most?" The Pharisee answered, "I suppose that he, to whom he forgave most." Jesus approved of this reply;

and, having reminded His host with what coolness he had received Him, even omitting in His case the usual courtesies of society, declared that the conduct of this despised woman was the expression of her overflowing gratitude, caused by her conscious deliverance from the burden of her sins; and, turning to the woman, He confirmed the assurance of her pardon, with the gracious words, "Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace."*

After the events which we have now considered, our Lord entered upon His second general circuit of Galilee. One of the evangelists expressly states, that "He went throughout every city and village, preaching and showing the glad tidings of the kingdom of God."† In this circuit He was accompanied by the twelve: some pious and respectable women, also, who had experienced the interpositions of His power and love, in rescuing them from diseases, or from the fearful tyranny of Satan, gladly attended Him from place to place, and "ministered unto Him of their substance."‡ The Saviour accepted their offerings, as a tribute of gratitude and respect; and imparted to them, as they listened to His discourses, the richest spiritual nourishment. His career was still one of light and blessing: He preached the glad tidings of a spiritual salvation, and invited the sorrowful and wretched to find rest and peace in Himself. Works of unbounded power continued to distinguish His ministry, and attest His claims; and many who saw His miracles, were overwhelmed with astonishment and awe. But He was still an object of hatred to the Scribes and Pharisees, and especially to those who

* Luke vii. 36—50.

† Luke viii. 1.

‡ Luke viii. 2, 3.

came down from Jerusalem,* to watch His conduct, and, if possible, injure His reputation among the people. These were so hardened by their continued resistance to the truth, and by the malignity which they cherished towards our Lord, that on one occasion they even presumed to say of Him, that He was in league with Beelzebub, and that it was through "the prince of the devils" that He cast out devils. The Saviour exposed the fallacy of such an assertion, and declared the fearful consequences of this sin against the Holy Ghost.† Others who did not proceed to this enormity of guilt, but who were chargeable with not duly considering the ample proofs which Jesus had already given of His loftiest claims, desired of Him some sign from above,—some public and glorious declaration of His Messiahship.‡ In their case, the perverseness of the human mind developed itself—as it has often since done—in dictating to God as to the *kind* and *degree* of evidence which He shall give, to attest His own revelation: but this is a demand to which the majesty of the Eternal One will not bend. The Saviour replied to their application in terms of solemn warning. He referred to that corrupt and ungodly state of heart in which the request originated; and affirmed, that no other kind of evidence than that which they already had, should be given to them, excepting that He Himself, when His lifeless body had been committed to the tomb, should on the third day rise again from the dead.§ Then, with peculiar and affecting solemnity, He pointed out the aggravated guilt of the men of that generation, who had listened

* Mark iii. 22. † Matthew xii. 24—32; Mark iii. 22—30.

‡ Matthew xii. 38. § Matthew xii. 39, 40.

to His teaching, and beheld His miracles, but had refused to come unto Him for salvation and life. He adverted to the men of other countries, and of other days, who had repented at the call of the messengers of God, and had sought instruction from the lips of His servants; and then He declared the final condemnation and ruin of those who turned away from Himself, the greatest Prophet that had ever appeared on earth. "The men of Nineveh shall rise in judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: because they repented at the preaching of Jonas; and, behold, a greater than Jonas is here. The queen of the south shall rise up in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: for she came from the uttermost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and, behold, a greater than Solomon is here."*

While the Redeemer was delivering these warnings, an incident occurred which led to a new development of His character, and induced Him to affirm a truth of deep interest. His mother and His brethren, or cousins, came to the place where He was teaching, and, standing without, sent a message to Him, that they wished to speak with Him. Some of the multitude who sat around Him conveyed this message. He replied, "Who is My mother? and who are My brethren?" and then, stretching forth His hand towards His devout and attached followers, He said, "Behold My mother and My brethren! for whosoever shall do the will of My Father which is in heaven, the same is My brother, and sister, and mother."† These words of our Lord are replete with spiritual

* Matthew xii. 41, 42. † Matthew xii. 46—50; Mark iii. 31—35.

meaning. They show, that mere affinity to His human nature was not allowed by Him to involve a special claim on His regard; since that regard must ever be dependent on *religious character*. But the humble, and devout, and obedient, *are* the objects of His peculiar love. They are brought into a most intimate relation to Himself. He views them as His brethren; He identifies their interests with His own; and He will acknowledge them, and delight in them, throughout eternity. To this dignity the Saviour invites us all; so that the humblest individual that trusts in His blood, and yields himself up to the Divine service, is raised to a state of privilege and blessing, in comparison of which the brightest glories, and the most thrilling joys, of earth, are vain and insignificant.

CHAPTER VII.

THE FIRST OCCASION OF THE REDEEMER'S TEACHING PUBLICLY IN PARABLES.—REMARKABLE INCIDENTS OF HIS MINISTRY IN CAPERNAUM AND ITS NEIGHBOURHOOD.—HIS THIRD GENERAL CIRCUIT OF GALILEE.—CONCLUSION OF THE SECOND YEAR OF HIS PUBLIC LABOURS.

OUR Lord had now completed His second general circuit of Galilee, and had returned with His disciples to the neighbourhood of Capernaum. The interest awakened by His miracles, and by the peculiar and authoritative character of His teaching, was unabated; but multitudes who gazed on His works of power, and listened to His affecting discourses, remained careless and

worldly. The Saviour had already lamented this, in the most pathetic manner; and had pointed out the fearful ruin to which those who continued impenitent under the clear light of His own ministry, were exposed.* The religious state of many around Him induced Him now to adopt a new method of instruction. He began to teach in *parables*,—thus veiling great spiritual truths under the images of outward and familiar objects. This method of presenting religious truth had a different effect on His sincere and devout hearers, and on those who merely listened to His words with idle curiosity. To the former He willingly unfolded the mysteries of the Christian economy, as far as they were able to bear them. The parables which He delivered, awakened their interest; and then receiving from Himself, in private, an explanation of the figures employed, they had a more vivid impression of the doctrines which He sought to convey. But the careless and obdurate, who only heard His parables, and came not to Him to be instructed in their meaning, could not understand their full import, and would retire with faint and imperfect apprehensions of truth. He Himself declared to His disciples the reason which induced Him to employ this method of teaching; and affirmed the great principle of the Divine government, into which His conduct must be resolved. In reply to their inquiry, “Why speakest Thou unto them in parables?” He said, “Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given. For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance: but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath.”†

* Matthew xi. 20—24.

† Matthew xiii. 10—12.

It would be wrong to suppose that the Redeemer's explanations of His parables were given exclusively to the twelve. One of the evangelists has stated, that several of the more serious attendants on His ministry, in addition to His apostles, requested Him to unfold the meaning of these figurative statements; and that the Saviour kindly received their application, and favoured them with the clearer light which they desired.* It was only from the careless and ungodly, who refused to inquire into the doctrines which He taught, and the realities which He announced, that the Saviour veiled the deep truths of His religion. And now that we can read His own expositions of His beautiful and instructive parables, and can contemplate them in the light of the entire economy of redemption, we possess in them an exhaustless treasure of heavenly wisdom.

Among the parables which the Saviour delivered at this period, as He sat in a small vessel on the sea of Galilee, that of the sower was the first. In this He pointed out the different classes of the hearers of the Gospel, and showed that only one of these classes, comprehending those who fully yield their hearts to the truth and grace of God, and bring forth the fruit of a holy life, will derive from the message of salvation any permanent benefit.† The parable of the wheat and the tares appears to have been the next which the Saviour uttered. This referred to the mixed character of human society, and indeed of the visible church, in the present state; it illustrated that spiritual agency which seeks to diffuse error and vice through the world, and to enfeeble

* Mark iv. 10.

† Matthew xiii. 1—9; Mark iv. 1—9; Luke viii. 4—8.

and corrupt the church; it showed that He, the Lord of His church and of the world, claims it as His own prerogative, to make an accurate and final separation between the truly pious, and those who are destitute of evangelical holiness; and it declared, that the time would come, when the history of this world should be wound up, and the grand and ultimate separation take place.* The Saviour delivered, also, the parable of the grain of mustard-seed,—to illustrate the rise and spread of His spiritual kingdom;† and that of the leaven hid in three measures of meal,—to show how the grace of God, received into the heart of man, and sincerely cherished there, diffuses its influence through his entire nature, and appears in the whole of his deportment and conduct.‡ Two other parables were uttered by Him, to mark the estimate which all His people form of the salvation which He bestows. To them it is as a “hidden treasure,” and “a pearl of great price;” in comparison of which everything else sinks into insignificance, and for the attainment of which no sacrifice is accounted too great.§

After delivering these parables, and unfolding their meaning to His disciples when retired from the multitude, the Saviour again entered into a vessel, and directed the twelve to pass over to the other side of the lake of Galilee.|| It was probably at this juncture that a Scribe came to Him, and said, “Master, I will follow Thee whithersoever Thou goest.” The Saviour replied, “Foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the

* Matthew xiii. 24—30.

† Matthew xiii. 31, 32; Mark iv. 30—32.

‡ Matthew xiii. 33. § Matthew xiii. 44—46. || Mark iv. 35.

Son of man hath not where to lay His head."* Thus did He intimate that to follow Him was not the way to worldly dignity, or even to ease and comfort, but that all who became His attendants must be prepared to undergo privation and suffering, and to share with Him in the lowliness and poverty of His outward circumstances. But while He would not encourage any delusive hopes in relation to His service, He enforced, in the most impressive manner, the duty of compliance with His own call to follow Him as even higher and more sacred than any obligation which could arise from natural relationship. For when one of His disciples said to Him, "Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father," the Redeemer replied, "Follow Me; and let the dead bury their dead."†

But we have now to contemplate a new display of the Saviour's dignity and power. We have to behold Him controlling with perfect ease the mightiest elements of nature,—hushing the tempestuous wind into stillness, and rendering the agitated sea placid and serene. His disciples, in obedience to His command, had set sail, and were crossing the sea of Galilee; and He, fatigued with the labours of the day, was sleeping on a pillow in the hinder part of the vessel. Suddenly there came down upon the lake one of those storms of wind by which the usual calmness of its waters is occasionally disturbed. The waves beat over the vessel, so that it was nearly filled with water, and was on the very point of sinking. The disciples, in great alarm and distress, came to Him, and awoke Him, saying, "Lord, save us; we perish." He mildly reproved them for giving way to so great

* Matthew viii. 19, 20.

† Matthew viii. 21, 22.

agitation and fear, while He, their almighty Friend, whose work on earth was not yet done, was with them; and then, arising, "He rebuked the winds and the sea, and there was a great calm." Emotions of astonishment and awe now filled their minds; and they said one to another, "What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey Him!"* The majesty and conscious power with which the Redeemer addressed those elements that defy the strength of man and overwhelm the proudest efforts of his skill, awakened their profound admiration; and when the tempest ceased, and all was calm around them, they felt that they were in the presence of a Being of unearthly dignity and infinite resources.

When our Lord and His disciples landed on the opposite side of the sea of Galilee, in the country of the Gadarenes, He was met by two demoniacs, who were unusually fierce, and one of whom in particular had inspired great terror into the neighbourhood, and had frustrated every attempt to subdue or control him.† This individual, when he beheld the Saviour, ran to Him, and, falling at His feet, worshipped Him. Jesus commanded the impure spirits who had tyrannised over the unhappy men, to come out of them. The demons, agitated and alarmed, replied, "What have we to do with Thee, Jesus, Thou Son of God Most High? Art Thou come hither to torment us before the time? I adjure Thee by God that Thou torment us not." The terror of these malignant spirits, when brought into the presence of our Lord's ineffable purity, here discovered

* Matthew viii. 23—27; Mark iv. 35—41; Luke viii. 22—25.

† Mark v. 1—5.

itself; and it became apparent, that they were looking forward to a state of still severer punishment than that in which they were now involved. They besought our Lord that He would not command them to depart into the abyss,—their own abode of gloom and horror; but that He would suffer them to enter into a herd of swine which was feeding upon the mountains. The Saviour permitted this; for while He rescued men from the tyranny of unholy spirits, He would not interpose to preserve from their violence animals which the people of that district kept for the sake of gain, in opposition to the Divine law. The demons entered into the swine; and the reality of their agency, and the fearful extent of their power, became obvious, for “the whole herd ran violently down a steep place into the sea, and perished in the waters.”* The inhabitants of the neighbouring city were apprised of these events by those who had the charge of the swine; and they came forth, with mingled feelings, to see Jesus, and to satisfy themselves as to the facts of the case. They saw the fiercer of the demoniacs sitting at the feet of our Lord, clothed and in his right mind; they perceived also, that the illustrious Prophet had permitted a signal judgment to fall upon them for their contemptuous disregard of the Divine precepts; and being affected with fear, and not appreciating those spiritual blessings which they might have received from Him, they besought Him that He would depart out of their coasts.† The Saviour wished not to protract His stay among a people who received Him so ungratefully; but again entered into

* Matthew viii. 28—32; Mark v. 6—13; Luke viii. 26—33.

† Matthew viii. 33, 34; Mark v. 14—17; Luke viii. 34—37.

the vessel to return to the neighbourhood of Capernaum. The individual who had suffered most severely from the tyranny of the powers of darkness, saw, with emotions of solicitude and sorrow, that his Deliverer was about to depart, and earnestly asked to be permitted to accompany Him. The Saviour did not accede to this request; but desired him rather to return to his own house, and show to his friends how great things God had done for him.* By this means our Lord sought to arouse the inhabitants of that region to an earnest consideration of His own character and claims; and to impress on His people, in every age, the duty of humbly acknowledging their obligations to the grace of God, and endeavouring to lead others to adore the riches of His love.

The Saviour's return to Capernaum was marked by fresh displays of His almighty power and condescending goodness. Jairus, one of the rulers of the synagogue, had been anxiously awaiting His arrival, that he might implore Him to avert the overwhelming bereavement with which he was threatened. He had an only daughter, who had attained the age of twelve years, and on whom his fondest affections were placed. But she lay at the very point of death; all human means had failed to arrest the progress of her disease; and his only hope was in the infinite resources of that illustrious Teacher, who had so widely diffused health and happiness around Him. The absence of the Lord Jesus had caused him deep solicitude; and it seemed as if the dreaded moment would arrive, and life become extinct, before he could have an opportunity of unfolding his sorrows to the

* Mark v. 18—20; Luke viii. 38, 39.

Redeemer. When our Lord had reached Capernaum, and was engaged in conversation with some of the disciples of John the Baptist, Jairus came to Him, and, falling at His feet, besought Him earnestly that He would come down to his house and restore his child, who was just ready to expire. His application to our Lord was marked, not only by the intensity of parental feeling, but by a strong and lively faith in His unbounded power: "My little daughter lieth at the point of death: I pray Thee, come and lay Thy hands on her, that she may be healed; and *she shall live.*" The Redeemer instantly accompanied him; and now a ray of hope and joy beamed upon his mind.* But on the way an interruption occurred. The people eagerly followed our Lord, and pressed upon Him. Among them came an afflicted woman, who for twelve years had an issue of blood, and whose disease no efforts of medical skill had been able to remove or alleviate. She had heard of the miracles of grace and love which the great Teacher had performed; and, though she shrunk from publicly asking Him to exert in her case His healing power, her confidence in Him prompted the conviction, that if she could only touch the hem of His robe, she should be restored to health. She touched Him, and was healed. Instantly that she thus came to Christ, and relied on Him for a cure, He honoured her faith, and her exhausted frame experienced the first sensation of returning vigour. But our Lord, to show that the virtue did not reside in His garment, but that there had been on His part a conscious putting forth of power, turned round and inquired, "Who touched Me?" After

* Mark v. 21—24; Matthew ix. 18, 19; Luke viii. 40—42.

a little hesitation, the afflicted woman came forward, and with trembling solicitude, fell down before Him, and told Him that she had touched Him to obtain relief from her wasting malady, and was immediately healed. Jesus calmed her agitation, and, with great tenderness and benignity, said to her, “ Daughter, be of good comfort: thy faith hath made thee whole; go in peace.”*

Jairus, meanwhile, waited with eager solicitude, for our Lord again to move forward towards his house, that He might restore the dying child. But, just as the Saviour uttered these words of consolation to the distressed woman, some of his servants came up to him, bearing the mournful tidings that his daughter had just expired. They evidently regarded the case as now hopeless; and therefore added, “ Why troublest thou the Teacher any further?” Our Lord well knew the conflict of feeling which, at this moment, had place in the breast of the afflicted father; and, with great condescension and tenderness, He interposed to sustain his faith, against the fearful shock which it had now to endure. He said to him, “ Be not afraid, only believe.” Then going forward to the house, and entering it with three of His disciples, Peter, James, and John, together with Jairus himself, He hushed the wailings of the assembled company, assuring them, though His words were received with scorn by many who were present, that the child was not permanently dead, but would soon be restored, as from sleep, by His own almighty power. Having directed these persons to retire, He went with the father and mother of the child, and His three disciples, into the apartment where her body was laid out, and,

* Mark v. 24—34; Matthew ix. 20—22; Luke viii. 43—48.

taking her by the hand, said with authority, “Maid, arise.” Instantly her departed spirit returned to the lifeless frame; and, rising up, she walked before them all, and, at the Saviour’s bidding, partook of food. The astonishment and gratitude of her parents were almost unbounded; but Jesus charged them not to go forth to announce the remarkable fact, nor to give to it any unnecessary publicity.* He reserved it to Himself to determine to what extent, and under what circumstances, His works of power should be proclaimed; and the inhabitants of Capernaum entertained far too low and earthly views of the Messiah’s reign,† for the Saviour to entrust any individual among them with the charge of attracting general attention to His stupendous acts.

The incidents on which we have now dwelt, illustrate, among other truths, the importance which the Lord Jesus attached to the exercise of *faith* in His almighty energy. In some instances, He seems even to have *required* it, in order to the putting forth of His power to heal. This was yet more apparent in the case of two blind men, who now applied to Him, addressing Him as the Son of David, the long-expected Messiah. They followed Him even into the house in which He resided in Capernaum, beseeching Him to regard them with compassion. He said to them, “Believe ye that I am able to do this?” They replied, “Yea, Lord:” and then, touching their eyes, He said, “According to your faith be it unto you;” and instantly their sight was restored.‡ Thus did He approve their confidence in His inherent and unbounded power; and thus did He teach us, that

* Mark v. 35—43; Matthew ix. 23—26; Luke viii. 49—56.

† John vi. 15.

‡ Matthew ix. 27—30.

It is a great principle of His government to honour and reward an implicit faith in Himself.

Soon after this, our Lord again visited the town of Nazareth, where the years of His private life had been spent. When the Sabbath arrived, He went into the synagogue, and unfolded those great spiritual truths on which He was accustomed to dwell. In the course of this visit, also, He performed a few works of power and love,—laying His hands on some who were afflicted, and instantly imparting to them health and vigour. But the inhabitants of Nazareth retained their unreasonable prejudices against Him, as one whom they had known in humble life; and their guilty unbelief caused the Redeemer not to honour that town, as He had done some other places, with the more signal proofs of His Divine glory.* One of the sacred historians has recorded, that “He did not many mighty works there, because of their unbelief;”† and another, after referring to this circumstance, adds the affecting and admonitory words, “And He marvelled because of their unbelief.”‡ To turn away from the Lord Jesus,—to refuse to admit His claims, and rely on Him for salvation,—marks a perverseness of mind, and a hardness of heart, which may well call forth astonishment and grief.

The Redeemer now entered upon His third general circuit of Galilee, teaching in the synagogues, and healing the sick that were brought before Him.§ But while He thus continued His personal labours, and visited all the cities and villages of the northern district of the Holy Land, He sent forth, likewise, His twelve

* Mark vi. 1—5; Matthew xiii. 54—57. † Matthew xiii. 58.

‡ Mark vi. 6. § Mark vi. 6; Matthew ix. 35.

apostles, in companies of two and two, to publish the message which they had heard from His lips; giving them power, at the same time, to remove diseases, and cast out devils. The charge which He delivered to them, on this occasion, has been recorded at length by St. Matthew, and more briefly by St. Mark and St. Luke.* It embraces many points of deep interest, and suggests several important views of the Redeemer's character and administration. But there are two considerations which our Lord urged on the attention of His apostles, to which we may particularly refer. He forewarned them, that they must expect *the hostility of the world*; that if He, their Master and Lord, had been rejected by many,—if it had even been said of Him, that He was in league with Beelzebub,—they could not hope to meet with different treatment, or to be welcomed and loved where He had been neglected and despised. He taught them, that it is the natural tendency of earnest, spiritual religion, to call forth dislike in the breasts of those who do not bow to its requirements, and seek its blessings; so that, even in the domestic circle, His people would often meet with ridicule and persecution. Though the Gospel which He proclaimed was, emphatically, “the Gospel of peace,” calculated and designed to raise the human spirit to peace with God, to fill it with sacred tranquillity, and to render it meek, benevolent, and forgiving; yet He affirmed, that the progress of His religion would necessarily involve conflicts of principle, and consequent disunion. And He uttered the startling and memorable words, “Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not

* Matthew x. 5—42; Mark vi. 7—11; Luke ix. 1—5.

to send peace, but a sword. For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; and a man's foes shall be they of his own household." In this charge to His apostles, also, our Lord claimed, as His inalienable right, *the supreme attachment of every human mind*. He required, that the love which His people should cherish towards Himself, should surpass the very strongest affection called forth by the relations of earth. Not even the pure and tender love which a child feels towards an honoured parent, nor the deep and intense attachment which glows in the breast of a parent towards his offspring, is to equal that which His followers are to bear to Him, and which they are to avow before men, though this avowal may expose them to obloquy and persecution. Life itself, He affirmed, must not be esteemed too great a sacrifice, if fidelity to Him should require its surrender. His people must be prepared rather to follow Him to the shame and ignominy of the cross, than renounce their allegiance to Him, and prove unfaithful to His cause. And thus, amidst the solemnities of the last day, one great test of character will be, whether we have stood forth to acknowledge Him before men, or have shrunk from the confession of discipleship to Him, that we might escape reproach, and retain the comforts and honours of the world. "He that loveth father or mother more than Me, is not worthy of Me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than Me, is not worthy of Me. And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after Me, is not worthy of Me. He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for My sake, shall find it."

“ Whosoever shall confess Me before men, him will I also confess before My Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny Me before men, him will I also deny before My Father which is in heaven.” Can we listen to these lofty claims, without a vivid impression of the personal dignity of Him who advanced them? It was not simply as an illustrious Prophet, or as a Pattern of purity and goodness, that Jesus could demand this supreme and constant love; it was rather as THE SON OF GOD, who, for our sakes, had allied Himself to our nature in outward lowness, and who was about to submit to yet deeper humiliation and sorrow.

The Redeemer, having sent forth His apostles, pursued His own career of evangelical labour,* and taught with power and unction in the various cities of Galilee. His fame now reached the ears of Herod Antipas, whose conscience was disturbed and restless on account of the recent murder of John the Baptist. To this act Herod had reluctantly consented; but, in a moment of unholy excitement, he had made a promise to Salome, the daughter of Herodias, to give her whatsoever she would ask; and she, at the instigation of her mother, who cherished an intense hatred to the reprobate of her sins, requested, in preference to everything else, the head of the holy Baptist.† Here was a melancholy proof of the tendency of licentious indulgence to harden the heart, and to fill it with malignity and revenge, so that even murder itself shall be perpetrated without a shudder! The remembrance of this cruel and wicked deed haunted the mind of Herod; and when he heard of the miracles of Jesus, he said to his servants, “This is John the

* Matthew xi. 1.

† Matthew xiv. 3—12; Mark vi. 17—29.

Baptist: he is risen from the dead; and therefore mighty works do show forth themselves in him.”*

When the apostles had finished the circuit assigned to them, they returned to our Lord at Capernaum, and informed Him of all they had done and taught.† With kind consideration for their state of fatigue and exhaustion, He proposed to them to retire, for awhile, to the desert of Bethsaida, in Decapolis, that they might rest from the excitement and toil of constant intercourse with the multitude. Accordingly, they sailed as privately as they could to the spot which the Saviour designed; but some who saw them departing, informed the inhabitants of Capernaum and the neighbouring towns of the circumstance, and a great multitude went on foot from these places, and gathered around Him.‡ His miracles had produced a deep impression on their minds, and had called forth lofty though indefinite expectations of something great and noble which He should perform;§ but many who thus flocked to Him, had no relish for the spiritual truths which He inculcated. When the Saviour beheld them, His compassionate heart, ever ready to feel for the sufferings of men, and to weep over their spiritual destitution, was deeply moved; and He came forth and resumed His labours.|| He taught them many things relative to “the kingdom of God;” and healed all that were afflicted, diffusing on every hand, light, and cheerfulness, and joy.¶ As He looked round on the multitude from the eminence on which He

* Matthew xiv. 1, 2; Mark vi. 14. † Mark vi. 30; Luke ix. 10.

‡ Mark vi. 31 — 33; Luke ix. 10, 11; Matthew xiv. 13; John vi. 1.

§ John vi. 2. || Mark vi. 34; Matthew xiv. 14. ¶ Luke ix. 11.

sat with His disciples,* and observed how eagerly they continued to wait on Him, without having made any provision for their bodily wants, He formed the purpose to relieve their hunger, and to afford them, at the same time, a new display of His unbounded power.† As the evening drew on, His disciples, to whom He had not yet disclosed this purpose, came to Him and entreated Him to send away the multitude, that they might go into the neighbouring towns and villages, and procure food. The Saviour replied, “They need not depart; give ye them to eat.” They expostulated with Him, alleging their inability to furnish so large a company with bread. He inquired of them, “How many loaves have ye?” Andrew, the brother of Simon Peter, answered, “There is a lad here, who hath five barley loaves, and two small fishes: but what are they among so many?” Our Lord then directed that they should make the multitude sit down, in ranks of one hundred; and as there were fifty of such ranks, composed of men alone, besides the women and children who were present, it became evident, that the company which He was about to feed, consisted of more than five thousand persons. The Saviour then took the five loaves and the two fishes; and having solemnly given thanks, and implored a blessing on them, broke the loaves, and, by His creating power, so multiplied the supply of food in that desert place, that the disciples continued to distribute from His hands, until the whole multitude had eaten and were satisfied, and more than twelve baskets full of fragments remained.‡ This new proof of His unlimited resources had a powerful effect

* John vi. 3. † John vi. 6.

‡ Mark vi. 35—44; Matthew xiv. 15—21; Luke ix. 12—17; John vi. 7—13.

on the assembled multitude. They saw that to Him nothing was impossible; but they were “slow of heart” to receive the spiritual lessons which He taught, and in their vain speculations they associated this display of His power with the certainty of victory over every foe, should He lead them forth as a mighty Prince.* But the Redeemer gave no countenance to these false and earthly views. His whole spirit, manner, and conduct showed that His intercourse with the multitude was designed only to promote their spiritual welfare, and to alleviate their temporal sufferings. Without allowing them an opportunity of expressing the feelings which were rising in their breasts, He directed His disciples to enter into a vessel, and again to cross the lake of Galilee; and then, having sent away the multitude, He retired to a mountain alone, to spend the last hours of that day in meditation and prayer.†

The passage of the disciples proved to be a stormy and dangerous one. The wind arose and beat against them; so that they had to toil at their oars to make head against it. About the fourth watch of the night, the Saviour appeared, walking on the sea, and seemed as if He would have passed by them. They, supposing it to be a spirit, were greatly agitated; but He calmed their minds with the sweet and simple words, “Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid.” With gratitude and joy, they recognised His well-known voice; and Peter, to show his unbounded confidence in his Master’s power, said, “Lord, if it be Thou, bid me come unto Thee on the water.” The permission was given; and Peter,

* John vi. 14, 15.

† Mark vi. 45, 46; Matthew xiv. 22, 23; John vi. 15, 16.

upheld by the Saviour's energy, walked for a little on the water to meet his Lord. But as the wind became still more boisterous, his faith gave place to doubt and fear; and he began to sink. In the extremity of his distress, he cried, "Lord, save me;" and immediately Jesus, with ineffable dignity and condescension, "stretched forth His hand, and caught him, and said unto him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?"* The lessons which this incident is calculated to teach, will at once suggest themselves to every thoughtful mind. Never should we triumph in the supposed strength of our faith, lest we should prove, as Peter did, that that faith, though sincere and lively, is yet comparatively feeble and inadequate to the trials upon which we venture. But, on the other hand, when Christ commands, we may safely go forward, amidst storms of difficulty, relying upon His faithfulness alone; and we shall be upheld by His unseen power. And how often, when His followers painfully feel their weakness, and look to Him for succour amidst the tempests and anxieties of life, does He interpose to bring them comfort and relief! The extremity of their sorrow and danger is the moment when He appears, to display His richest mercy, and reveal the sufficiency of His grace.

But the rescue of Peter was followed by another manifestation of the Redeemer's glory. Jesus entered with that disciple into the vessel; and instantly the wind ceased, and the passage, which had proved so difficult and perilous, was happily and almost immediately brought to a close.† The impression produced by these occurrences

* Matthew xiv. 24—31; Mark vi. 47—50; John vi. 18—20.

† Matthew xiv. 32; Mark vi. 51; John vi. 21.

on the minds of all who were in the vessel, was deep and overwhelming: they felt that they were in the presence of One possessed of awful and mysterious greatness; and, remembering in how lofty and peculiar a sense He had claimed to be the Son of God, "they came and worshipped Him, saying, Of a truth Thou art the Son of God." Nor did the Saviour repel this homage: He received it as a just acknowledgment of His unearthly dignity, and as an expression of humble confidence in Himself.*

Jesus landed with His disciples in the region of Gennesaret, and proceeded to Capernaum, scattering blessings as He passed along, and diffusing the glow of health through many a diseased and emaciated frame. The inhabitants of that district gratefully hailed the appearance of the distinguished Prophet among them: they brought unto Him all that were diseased,—even carrying on beds those who could not otherwise be presented to His notice; and many crowded around Him, and besought Him that they might touch only the border of His garment; and "as many as touched Him were made perfectly whole."†

A considerable number of those whom Jesus had miraculously fed, had remained on the other side of the sea of Galilee; and when they found that He had departed, as well as His disciples, they took shipping, and came to Capernaum to seek Him.‡ And now the Saviour addressed to them a discourse, full of momentous truths, relative to the design of His appearance,—the spiritual nature of the blessings which He offered to man,—and the intimate connexion of these blessings with His approaching sacri-

* Matthew xiv. 33. † Matthew xiv. 34—36; Mark vi. 53—56.
‡ John vi. 22—24.

ficial death. To those who beheld His miracles with astonishment, but had no desire for spiritual good, He said, with solemn emphasis, "Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you; for Him hath God the Father sealed :" and when they inquired, "What shall we do, that we might work the works of God?" He answered, "This is the work of God, that ye believe on Him whom He hath sent." Some of them now demanded of Him a sign from heaven, and referred to the manna with which the wants of their fathers had been supplied as they journeyed through the wilderness from Egypt to Canaan. Our Lord, in reply, dwelt on that arrangement, as typical of His own coming into the world, to satisfy the wants of the human spirit, and to meet its cravings for peace and happiness. He spoke of Himself as "the bread of life;" and in the clearest and most explicit manner affirmed, that He had come down from heaven to give life unto the world. But He taught them further, that, in order to bestow spiritual and eternal life on men, He must Himself become a sacrifice—His humanity must be given up to death, and His blood be shed as the sin-offering for the world's guilt. It was in this character that He was to become the object of *trust* to our perishing race. That trust, He affirmed, must be lively, earnest, and realising. We must "come unto Him," under the gracious leading of the Father; we must even "eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink His blood," relying on His sacrifice alone for acceptance and spiritual life, and thus rising to intimate communion with Himself. Profound and mysterious were many of the truths which the Redeemer

now uttered ; and they were blended with solemn warnings of the danger of treating His atonement with neglect. Many who had hitherto followed Him with interest, were offended at this discourse ; and they "went back, and walked no more with Him." Jesus then appealed to the twelve, "Will ye also go away ?" Peter, from the fulness of his heart, replied, "Lord, to whom shall we go ? Thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe, and are sure, that Thou art the Messiah, the Son of the living God." The Saviour accepted this sincere and cordial expression of his faith and love ; but, with mournful feelings, He adverted to the treacherous purpose which one even of the twelve had formed.* The feast of the passover was now at hand ; and the Redeemer foresaw that, when another year should have elapsed, that treacherous purpose would develop itself, and the great event of His own sacrificial death, which He now figuratively set forth, would thus be brought about.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE LEADING EVENTS OF THE REDEEMER'S HISTORY, FROM THE COMMENCEMENT OF THE THIRD YEAR OF HIS PUBLIC MINISTRY, UNTIL THE FEAST OF TABERNACLES IN THAT YEAR.

THE third passover had now arrived since the Lord Jesus entered upon His career as the great Prophet of mankind. On former occasions He had gone up to

* John vi. 25—71.

Jerusalem, to be present in the temple at that interesting period, and to share in the religious solemnities by which it was distinguished; but this year, He appears to have remained in Galilee. One reason of this was, that the Pharisees of Jerusalem had formed a decided purpose to kill Him, as soon as an opportunity should be afforded; and our Lord, whose work on earth was not yet to terminate, but who was still for a while to shed the light of heavenly truth over many districts of the Holy Land, chose in this way to frustrate the immediate accomplishment of their malignant purpose.* Other means of preservation were open to Him, whose power had so often controlled universal nature; but now it seemed good to Him to remain at a distance from the metropolis, and to continue His labours in the neighbourhood of Capernaum.

After the feast had transpired, some of the Pharisees and Scribes of Jerusalem came down to Galilee, to observe His conduct, and, if possible, to lessen His influence as a Teacher.† Perceiving that some of His disciples partook of food without having previously washed their hands, they censured our Lord for allowing them, in this way, to transgress the tradition of the elders.‡ His answer was replete with instruction and warning. He adverted to the wide distinction to be made between the commandments of God and the traditions of men; the former of which are binding upon the conscience, and affect our eternal destiny; while the latter have to commend themselves to our judgment, and solicit our approval. He showed them, that they who were so

* John vii. 1. † Matthew xv. 1; Mark vii. 1.

‡ Matthew xv. 2; Mark vii. 2—5.

scrupulous in regard to the tradition of the elders, had, by that very tradition, set aside one of the most explicit commandments of the Most High. From amidst the glories of Sinai, God had issued the precept, "Honour thy father and thy mother;" and this precept required, among other things, the alleviation of their sufferings in advanced age, and the supply of their wants, should they need assistance. But the Pharisaic tradition taught, that if a man chose to devote to the altar that property which should have gone to the support of his aged parents, the obligation to provide for them was superseded, and his conscience might enjoy repose.* Our Lord then pointed out the grand defect in the character of the Pharisees,—that defect which vitiated their outward services, and rendered them offensive, rather than acceptable, to God. Their religion was altogether *external*. Their hearts were afar off from God, even while they approached Him with their lips in acts of worship, and uttered words expressive of gratitude, and confidence, and love.† An important general truth was thus inculcated by the Redeemer,—that God has respect to *the state of the heart*; and that there must be, on our part, inward sincerity, and a surrender of the affections to Him, if we would really sustain the character of His people, or enjoy His smile and blessing.

But the incident which had just transpired, afforded an opportunity to our Lord of exhibiting this truth under a particular aspect, and one calculated to impress the minds of a Jewish audience. Calling the multitude around Him, He said to them, with peculiar emphasis,

* Matthew xv. 3—6; Mark vii. 9—13.

† Matthew xv. 7—9; Mark vii. 6, 7.

“Hearken unto Me every one of you, and understand: there is nothing from without a man that, entering into him, can defile him; but the things which come out of him, those are they that defile the man. If any man have ears to hear, let him hear.”* Here the Divine Teacher Himself declares, that man does not contract defilement from the food of which he partakes, but from the indulgence and open manifestation of inward evils. The human heart, He affirms, is the seat of moral impurity; and the principles of evil which exist there, develop themselves in those works of violence and licentiousness which spread misery through our world.†

Soon after this conversation, our Lord proceeded to the coasts of Tyre and Sidon, there to exercise His ministry, and scatter the blessings of His love.‡ One miracle which He performed in this district is recorded by two of the Evangelists; and the circumstances connected with it suggest important lessons to His people in every age. They especially show the value which He places on a firm and unwavering confidence in Himself; and they show, also, that He sometimes sees fit to try that confidence, in order to call it forth in yet more vigorous exercises. A Gentile woman, a native of Syro-Phœnicia, cried after Him, as He walked along, “Have mercy on me, O Lord, Thou Son of David: my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil.” But the Redeemer, who was usually so ready to listen to the cry of distress, and to put forth His power to alleviate the sorrows of mankind, appeared not to regard her. His disciples

* Mark vii. 14—16; Matthew xv. 10, 11.

† Mark vii. 21—23; Matthew xv. 18—20.

‡ Matthew xv. 21; Mark vii. 24.

then came to Him, and interceded on her behalf. They referred to the depth of her anguish, as evinced by her manner, and the perseverance with which she urged her request; and desired our Lord to accede to her application, and send her away in peace. But He replied to them, that His mission as a public Teacher was rather to "the lost sheep of the house of Israel," than to those who were without. The distressed woman, knowing that if Jesus should refuse to help her, her daughter must continue hopelessly to suffer,—and confiding also in the benignity and grace which dwelt in His heart,—ventured now to throw herself at His feet, and importunately to ask His interposition. He replied to her, "It is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it to dogs." But even this apparent repulse did not shake her faith. She meekly replied, "Truth, Lord: yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their master's table." The Saviour honoured her confidence in the riches of His grace and love; and now addressed to her the words of comfort and peace, "O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt." His Divine power, at that instant, expelled the demon who had tyrannised over her child; and when she returned to her house, she found her daughter composed and tranquil.*

Our Lord afterwards returned through the coasts of Decapolis to the lake of Galilee, continuing His works of power and love, and inculcating the truths of spiritual religion.† One scene which the apostle Matthew has briefly depicted, illustrates the wide extent to which His

* Matthew xv. 22—28; Mark vii. 25—30.

† Matthew xv. 29; Mark vii. 31.

almighty energy was put forth, to remove the afflictions of mankind. He went up into a mountain, and sat down there; and great multitudes came unto Him, bringing with them the lame, the blind, the dumb, the maimed, and persons afflicted with various diseases, and placed them at His feet, as fit objects of His compassion. The Saviour restored them all; and as the assembled people beheld those who had been lame walking with ease and comfort, the blind enjoying sight, the dumb speaking with readiness, the maimed restored to soundness, and the sick again feeling the freshness and glow of health, they were filled with sacred awe, and “glorified the God of Israel.”*

It appears that the multitude who had now gathered around our Lord, and had witnessed this display of His benignity and power, lingered near Him, to listen to His teaching, until the third day, when their supply of food was wholly exhausted. The Saviour looked upon them with affectionate interest, and, calling to Him His disciples, said, “I have compassion on the multitude, because they continue with Me now three days, and have nothing to eat: and I will not send them away fasting, lest they faint in the way.” His disciples, as on the former occasion, adverted to the impossibility of their providing food, in a place comparatively desert, for so large a number. Jesus inquired, “How many loaves have ye?” They replied, “Seven, and a few little fishes.” These the Saviour took; and, having the people arranged before Him, He gave thanks, and distributed them through His disciples to all who were present, multiplying the food, so as to afford to all a sufficient

* Matthew xv. 29—31.

supply. Here was another remarkable instance of His creating power. Four thousand men, besides women and children, were fed from those few loaves and fishes; and even the fragments which remained were enough to fill seven baskets.*

The Saviour then dismissed the multitude, and crossed the lake with His disciples, so as to land on the coast of Magdala.† Here He met with a painful development of that perverseness of spirit which distinguished so many of the Pharisees and Sadducees, and caused them to unite in resisting His claims. Some individuals of both these sects came forth, and began to propose questions to Him, hoping in some way to perplex Him before the people, and especially demanding, that He would show them a sign from heaven, in preference to those works of power which He was daily performing. The Redeemer was deeply affected, as He beheld these men, and thought of their moral state. He exposed their inconsistency; and “sighing deeply in His spirit,” declared, that the only sign which should be given to them, in addition to those which they had so ungratefully disregarded, should be “the sign of the Prophet Jonah.” This was an allusion to His own resurrection from the dead, as the crowning miracle of His religion, and that which should stamp the seal of Divine authority upon His loftiest claim,—to be the Eternal Son of God.‡

The Saviour then left them, and again entering with His disciples into the vessel, sailed to the other side of

* Matthew xv. 32—38; Mark viii. 1—9.

† Matthew xv. 39; Mark viii. 10.

‡ Matthew xvi. 1—4; Mark viii. 11, 12.

the sea of Galilee.* On landing, He addressed to them the charge, "Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees." At first they supposed that His words were to be understood literally; for they had just discovered that they had forgotten to take bread. But the Redeemer taught them, that His caution had a deeper meaning; that the mode in which a supply of food could be obtained, need not awaken their anxiety, since He, who had fed so many thousands with a few loaves, could readily meet all their wants; but that it was solemnly binding on them, and on His people in every age, to guard against those corruptions of His truth which would result from the admixture with it of the characteristic principles of either of the sects which He had named.† The spiritual and earnest religion which He inculcated, was at an equal distance from the cold formalism of Pharisaic worship, and the pride of intellect cherished by the Sadducean sect. The Saviour demanded *humility* as the first requisite on the part of all His people; and He called upon them, while they fled to His cross as their only refuge, *to surrender their hearts to God*, so that their obedience should be the natural expression of their inward devotion. It is a mournful thought, that this caution of our Lord has been so often overlooked by those who have professed His name. Most of the errors which have corrupted and enfeebled His church in successive ages, may be attributed to the insinuation and development of the Pharisaic or Sadducean spirit. Some, alas! who have rigidly observed the external duties of piety, have been

* Matthew xvi. 4; Mark viii. 13.

† Matthew xvi. 5—12; Mark viii. 14—21.

destitute of a living faith, and have even poured contempt on the deep emotions, and the earnest strivings, of the spiritual life: while others, proudly confiding in the strength of their own intellect, have sought to obliterate from Christianity all that is mysterious and supernatural, and have divested it even of the doctrines which form its glory and its might.

Having landed on the eastern side of the Galilean lake, our Lord proceeded to Bethsaida. Here they brought unto Him a blind man, whose eyes they requested Him to touch. On many occasions, the Saviour had instantly imparted the gift of sight by a touch or a word; but, in this instance, He deviated from His usual method, perhaps to teach us that His operations of grace admit of many *varieties*, and that the *mode* in which He shall bless His people must be left to His own infinite wisdom. Taking the blind man by the hand, He led him out of the town; and having spit upon his eyes, and put His hands upon him, asked him if he saw anything. The afflicted man looked up, and said, "I see men as trees, walking." The Saviour then again put His hands upon his eyes, and made him look up; and "he was restored, and saw every man clearly."*

Soon afterwards our Lord departed to the neighbourhood of Cæsarea Philippi, and visited the several towns and villages of that district.† This journey was chiefly remarkable for several important conversations which passed between Himself and His disciples. On one occasion, when He had been praying alone, and His disciples had just rejoined Him, He called their attention to His *personal claims*. "Whom," He asked, "do

* Mark viii. 22—26.

† Matthew xvi. 13; Mark viii. 27.

men say that I, the Son of man, am?" His disciples answered, "Some say that Thou art John the Baptist; some, Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets." Our Lord then inquired, what were *their own* views of His person and character; for the question which He had just before proposed, was only intended to draw their attention to this subject, and to prepare them to receive the full impression of the truth which He was about to inculcate. Peter replied, with distinctness and emphasis, "Thou art the Messiah, the Son of the living God." Our Lord, in the most solemn manner, approved this declaration, and pronounced Peter blessed, as having been raised, by the special illumination of the Father, to a vivid, though inadequate, perception of the glorious mystery of His person. He affirmed, that on this immovable truth His church should ever rest; and though it should be assailed by the powers of darkness, it should stand firm and secure. To Peter himself He promised, as He subsequently did to all the faithful eleven, a position of high authority, as a teacher in His church, and that plenary communication of the Spirit which should qualify him for his office, and render his expositions of truth and duty binding upon the consciences of men.* This conversation doubtless left a powerful impression on the minds of the twelve. They had often heard the Redeemer avow Himself to be the Son of God; but now they had a more vivid conviction of this great truth; and they were taught by our Lord Himself, that it lay at the basis of the plan of human recovery, and would form, in every age, the sure foundation of His people's hopes.

* Matthew xvi. 13—20; Mark viii. 27—30; Luke ix. 18—21.

But the explicit disclosure which the Saviour had now made of the grandeur of His personal claims, was followed by a distinct announcement, that there were before Him *scenes of deepest suffering and ignominy*. On various occasions He had alluded to His own *death*, as necessary to the salvation of men; but now He began to unfold to His apostles some of its circumstances of shame and sorrow. He told them, that ere long He should go up to Jerusalem to suffer and die;—that though He had scattered blessings wherever He had taught, yet He should be rejected, and treated with utter indignity and scorn;—that the malice of the chief priests and elders would be gratified in consigning Him to a painful death;—but that their triumph would be partial and temporary. On the third day, He declared, He should rise again, to establish His loftiest claims, and bestow spiritual and eternal blessings on His devout and faithful people. One of the sacred historians says, with beautiful simplicity, “From that time forth began Jesus to show unto His disciples how that He must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders, and chief priests, and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day.”* Peter, though fully convinced of the unearthly dignity of his Master, had no correct idea of the plans of Infinite Wisdom relative to the *atonement* which He should offer. He had observed, with interest, the displays of His inherent and resistless power; he had seen how all nature owned Him as its Lord; and often the purity and goodness of the Redeemer’s character had called forth, in his mind, sentiments of profound veneration and awe. But to think of this glorious and almighty Prophet stooping

* Matthew xvi. 21: see also Mark viii. 31; Luke ix. 22.

to be treated with indignity, and enduring a violent death, was contrary to his cherished hopes, and distressing to his heart; and, taking our Lord aside, he began to say to Him, almost in a tone of reproof, "Be it far from Thee, Lord: this shall not be unto Thee." But Jesus, turning to His disciples, said to Peter, with peculiar solemnity, "Get thee behind Me, Satan: thou art an offence unto Me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men."* Thus did He teach them, that His declarations relative to His sufferings must be literally understood; and that the deep anguish through which He should pass, and the ignominious death to which He should submit, were part of the plan of God for the recovery and salvation of mankind.

But the Saviour now proceeded to affirm another truth, and to press it, with the greatest earnestness, on the attention, not of His apostles only, but of all the people who were at hand. He called them all around Him, and declared, that they who would enjoy the blessings of His grace, must be prepared *to follow Him to suffering and death*,—that every one who entered upon His service must "deny himself,"—must no longer seek personal ease, or dignity, or pleasure, as the great end of existence, but be ready to sacrifice every worldly comfort, and even life itself, should fidelity to Him require the surrender. He showed them, that this was the way to eternal life and blessedness; and that the spirit of *self-renunciation*, habitually maintained and developed, would meet at last with the highest honours and rewards. And then, to arouse them all to serious

* Matthew xvi. 22, 23; Mark viii. 32, 33.

reflection, and to call forth in the minds of men, in every age, a profound regard to the realities of eternity, He added the impressive words, “What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? For the Son of man shall come in the glory of His Father with His angels; and then He shall reward every man according to his works.”*

Within a few days after these conversations, our Lord left the neighbourhood of Cæsarea Philippi, and journeyed southward to the lower part of Galilee. Here there occurred the memorable scene of the *transfiguration*. The Saviour, having selected three of His disciples, Peter, James, and John, to be the witnesses of this manifestation of His glory, and to attest it to the world when the time should arrive for its announcement, retired with them to “a high mountain apart.” While He was there engaged in prayer, the ordinary lowness of His appearance was exchanged for a brightness too dazzling for the steadfast gaze of man; for His countenance “shone as the sun,” and His very raiment assumed an unearthly whiteness and splendour. To add to the interest of the scene, Moses, the lawgiver of Israel, and Elijah, the most eminent of the ancient prophets, appeared on the sacred mount, and engaged in conversation with Him. From their abodes of glory, they had marked His career on earth; and now that He was approaching the period of His humiliation and death, they rejoiced to be permitted to acknowledge Him as their Saviour and their Lord; and, with deep interest, they conversed with Him respecting “His decease which He should

* Matthew xvi. 24—27; Mark viii. 34—38.

accomplish at Jerusalem." At the time of the commencement of this vision, the three disciples were oppressed with sleep. It was now night; they were alone on a mountain with their Lord; the very fact, that they had been separated from their brethren to accompany Him to this solitude, had doubtless awakened in their minds peculiar emotions; and as the Redeemer had probably spent a long time in prayer before this mysterious change in His appearance took place, they felt fatigued and exhausted, and sank into the repose of sleep. But when the scene opened in all its splendour, they were aroused to behold it; and, recognising Moses and Elijah, through a special inspiration, they gazed with mingled admiration, and fear, and joy, on the glory which was conferred on their Lord. Peter, under the impulse of these conflicting emotions, exclaimed, "Master, it is good for us to be here: and let us make three tabernacles; one for Thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias." But while he yet spake, a bright cloud overshadowed them; and the voice of the Eternal Father broke from that cloud, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased: hear ye Him."* Thus was the *personal dignity* of the Redeemer attested from on high. While other prophets were only the *servants* of Jehovah, He was **THE SON**,—the Object of the Father's ineffable complacency and delight. Thus, too, was His *supreme authority* declared. His people are to "hear Him" with lowly reverence; they are to embrace His instructions, to obey His precepts, to confide in His promises, and to rely on Him for eternal life. Even while they contemplate Him in the bitterness of His anguish, and the depth of His shame, they are to

* Matthew xvii. 1—5; Mark ix. 2—7; Luke ix. 28—35.

remember that He was “the Prince of life,” “the Lord of glory;” and, placing the dignity of His person in connexion with His sufferings and death, they are to trust in the infinite merit of His perfect sacrifice.

The three disciples were affected with almost overwhelming awe, as they listened to the voice which broke from the cloud of light. One of the sacred historians relates, that “when they heard it, they fell on their face, and were sore afraid.” But the Saviour, whose tenderness and condescension were equal to His majesty, “came and touched them, and said, Arise, and be not afraid.” They obeyed His gracious direction, and, looking around, they found that now they were left alone with their Lord, who would still mingle with them, as He had done, in the lowliness of ordinary humanity.* As the Saviour came down from the mountain with them, on the following morning, He charged them not to publish the vision, until the great event of His own resurrection from the dead should have taken place.† Important purposes were doubtless to be answered by the scene of the transfiguration, and by its announcement when the fitting time should arrive: but this “sign from heaven,” with which the chosen three had been favoured, was not to be proclaimed to the men of that generation, or made known to any others of the disciples, until the Redeemer should have offered up Himself as a propitiatory sacrifice, and have risen again to establish the hopes of His people, and to convince even His enemies of the truth of all His claims.

It is remarkable, that this reference of our Lord to

* Matthew xvii. 6—8; Mark ix. 8; Luke ix. 36.

† Matthew xvii. 9; Mark ix. 9.

His resurrection from the dead was not yet fully understood, even by the three who were now with Him. His declarations but a few days previously, relative to His approaching death and resurrection, had been most explicit; and yet they could scarcely bring themselves to think of their Master as actually passing through the mortal agony. But they pondered the words which He now uttered; and, when alone, they conversed respecting them. "They kept that saying with themselves, questioning one with another what the rising from the dead should mean."* They did not, however, now press Him to explain His meaning; but rather asked Him, in consequence, probably, of the appearance of Elijah on the sacred mount, "Why say the Scribes that Elias must first come?" Our Lord informed them, in reply, that the prophetic intimations relative to the appearance of a prophet in "the spirit and power of Elijah," as the forerunner of the Messiah, had already been fulfilled; and He added, that even as that prophet had been rejected by many, so He Himself must suffer many things from the chief priests and elders, and be treated by them with utter contempt and scorn.†

When the Saviour, accompanied by the three who had witnessed His transfiguration, came to the rest of His disciples, He found them encircled with a great multitude, and engaged in eager disputation with the Scribes. The multitude, perceiving Him approach, came to Him and saluted Him. He inquired of the Scribes, "What question ye with them?" But ere they could reply, a distressed father ran to Him, and, kneeling down before Him, repeated his tale of woe. He had an only son,

* Mark ix. 10. † Matthew xvii. 10—13; Mark ix. 11—13.

whom an evil spirit frequently threw into the most violent convulsions, so that he foamed at the mouth, and gnashed with his teeth, and, rushing to the fire or to the water, sought to destroy himself. This son, pining away in the very bloom of youth, he had brought to the nine apostles in the absence of their Lord; and they had been unable to cast out the demon, or to restrain his malignant power. The Saviour listened to this sorrowful address; and then, turning to the Scribes who had been disputing with His disciples and triumphing in their want of success, said to them, and to all among the multitude who sympathised with them, or whose predominant feeling was that of curiosity rather than of calm and settled confidence in His almighty power, "O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you? how long shall I suffer you? Bring him unto Me." They brought the youth to our Lord; but, even now, the demon threw him into fearful convulsions, so that "he fell on the ground, and wallowed foaming." The Redeemer then said to the father, "How long is it ago since this came unto him?" He answered, "Of a child; and oftentimes it hath cast him into the fire, and into the waters, to destroy him: but if Thou canst do anything, have compassion on us, and help us." Memorable was the reply of our Lord. He said to him in effect, "The question is not concerning My power, but concerning thy faith: all things are possible to him that believeth." Immediately the afflicted father, bursting into tears, and troubled lest any want of faith on his part should prevent the restoration of his child, exclaimed, "Lord, I believe: help Thou mine unbelief." The people now came running with eagerness to witness the exciting scene;

but our Lord, without any further delay, charged the demon to come out of him, and to enter no more into him. The infuriated spirit yielded, though reluctantly, to this word of power; and making a last effort to injure the youth whom he had so long harassed, came out of him, leaving him almost as one dead. Some, indeed, among the crowd, exclaimed, "He is dead;" but Jesus took him by the hand, and, lifting him up, presented him to his father in the enjoyment of tranquillity and health. The disciples afterwards inquired of our Lord, why their efforts to expel the demon had proved unsuccessful; and the Saviour reminded them of their want of a lively faith in Himself, and stated the necessity, in a case so obstinate and fearful as this, of securing, by prayer and fasting, that lofty and unwavering trust in His constant agency and resistless power, before which every obstacle, however formidable, must give way.*

Our Lord, after this, went from the neighbourhood of Mount Tabor towards Capernaum. In the course of this journey, He again drew the attention of His disciples to His approaching sufferings and death. He informed them, that although He had displayed a power to control universal nature, and to restrain the efforts of invisible beings far mightier than the human race, yet He should be betrayed into the hands of men, and they should kill Him, and the third day He should rise again. He charged them to ponder the truths which He thus announced,—to reflect on them as most certain and momentous. But the disciples could not, as yet, enter into the deep import of the Saviour's words, or understand the important bearing of His death and

* Matthew xvii. 14—21; Mark ix. 14—29; Luke ix. 37—42.

resurrection on the salvation of mankind. One feeling pervaded their minds whenever He spoke of His coming sufferings,—a feeling of sorrow and distress; and they were afraid to ask Him the full meaning of His declarations, lest fresh disclosures should be made to them which would awaken yet deeper solicitude and anguish.*

When our Lord had returned to Capernaum, an incident occurred, which illustrated the grandeur of His claims, and evinced, also, His unbounded knowledge and power. The persons who collected the tribute-money annually paid by every Israelite above twenty years of age, for the support of the temple-worship, came to Peter and said, "Doth not your Master pay tribute?" Peter replied in the affirmative. On his coming into the house, to report this conversation, and to ask for our Lord's instructions, Jesus anticipated him by inquiring, "What thinkest thou, Simon? Of whom do the kings of the earth take custom or tribute? of their own children, or of strangers?" Peter answered, "Of strangers." Our Lord rejoined, "Then are the children free: notwithstanding, lest we should offend them, go thou to the sea, and cast an hook, and take up the fish that first cometh up; and when thou hast opened his mouth, thou shalt find a piece of money: that take, and give unto them for Me and thee." It is probable, that at this time, our Lord, who submitted to a lot of outward lowliness and poverty, had no money at hand; but He met the application made to Him in a manner eminently suited to His dignity and power. He, indeed, might justly have claimed exemption from that tribute. It was a *religious*

* Matthew xvii. 22, 23; Mark ix. 30—32; Luke ix. 43—45.

offering, given for the support of the temple, as the house of God, the place of solemn worship, adorned with the symbol of Jehovah's throne, as sprinkled with the blood of atonement, and thus rendered accessible to man. But He was the Son of God; and from Him, as sustaining so high and peculiar a relation to the Father, no tribute was strictly due. But He waived this claim, lest He should be supposed to be indifferent to the temple-service, or to neglect the ceremonial law; and by the direction which He gave to Peter, He provided for the emergency of the case, and evinced, in the clearest manner, His infinite knowledge and exhaustless resources.*

While the disciples were on their way to Capernaum, they had disputed among themselves, which of them should be the greatest in that kingdom which their Master would eventually establish. When they came to our Lord, after this controversy, He inquired of them, "What was it that ye disputed among yourselves by the way?" They, conscious that they had indulged an improper feeling, hesitated at first to mention to Him the subject of their conversation, and remained silent. But He took a little child, and placed him in the midst of them beside Himself, and then taking him in His arms, He said unto them, with peculiar emphasis, "Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Whosoever, therefore, shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven."† Nothing could teach them more impressively than this action and

* Matthew xvii. 24—27.

† Matthew xviii. 1—5; Mark ix. 33—37; Luke ix. 46—48.

address of our Lord, how foreign from the spirit of His religion is an aspiring and ambitious temper. He warned them, that the guilty love of pre-eminence must endanger their own salvation; and He affirmed the truth, that they who were really "great" in His kingdom, instead of seeking to occupy the more prominent positions, and grasping at outward dignity and power, were intent rather on walking humbly with God, and cultivating pure and spiritual affections.

The apostle John now mentioned an incident which had recently occurred, in order to obtain the judgment of our Lord on the propriety of the course which they had taken. "Master," he said, "we saw one casting out devils in Thy name, and we forbad him, because he followeth not with us." Jesus immediately replied, "Forbid him not: for he that is not against us is for us."* Thus did He teach His disciples that they should guard against an exclusive spirit, and be willing to recognise the evidences of humble faith in Himself, and of sincere love to Him, wherever they were found. He went on to speak of the peculiar dearness to Himself, and to the Father, of all who should come to Him, and rely on Him with the simplicity and affection of children; and He pointed out the fearful and overwhelming ruin which must fall on those who should cast a stumbling-block in the way of His humblest followers, or lead them astray from the paths of righteousness and peace.† Aware of the tendency of the human heart to cherish offence, if a supposed injury or slight has been received, He gave instructions how His people were to act in

* Luke ix. 49, 50; Mark ix. 38—40.

† Mark ix. 40—50; Matthew xviii. 7—14.

every such case: * and then He added several declarations, full of deep meaning, and calculated to impress the minds of His apostles with a conviction of the importance of their trust, and to assure them of His constant presence with them, and with His people in every age, who meet to do homage to His "name,"—to succour, and guide, and bless them. †

Peter now came forward, and asked, "Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times?" Our Lord replied, "I say not unto thee, Until seven times, but, Until seventy times seven." ‡ Beautiful and impressive words! worthy of Him who "came to seek and to save that which was lost." Never are His people to refuse to welcome one who has injured or grieved them, but who comes to ask forgiveness: never, indeed, are they to indulge a spirit of resentment or unkindness; but remembering how great has been the mercy shown to them by God, they are to have compassion on their erring brethren, and to seek their recovery. This lesson our Lord proceeded to enforce by an impressive parable; in which He showed how offensive to God, and how perilous to our own souls, is an unfor-giving temper. § Oh that His words had ever been remembered by His professing people; and that we were all more anxious to learn of Him who was "meek and lowly in heart!"

* Matthew xviii. 15—17.

† Matthew xviii. 21, 22.

‡ Matthew xviii. 18—20.

§ Matthew xviii. 23—35.

CHAPTER IX.

THE REDEEMER'S DISCOURSES AND MIRACLES AT JERUSALEM, DURING THE FEAST OF TABERNACLES, AND THE FEAST OF DEDICATION, IN THE LAST YEAR OF HIS PUBLIC MINISTRY.—HIS DEPARTURE FROM JERUSALEM TO BETHABARA.—HIS VISIT TO BETHANY, AND THE RAISING OF LAZARUS.

WE have now reached a period of deep interest in the Redeemer's history. During the last eighteen months, His labours had been devoted to the northern district of the Holy Land; and the metropolis of Judaea, where so many had treated His claims with guilty neglect, and where so malignant a feeling was cherished towards Him by the chief priests and elders, had been left without His visits of mercy. The last occasion on which He had gone up to that city, was the feast of the pass-over in the preceding year; when He restored to perfect health the impotent man who had so long sought relief, in vain, at the pool of Bethesda. At that time, He was brought into controversy with many of the leading Pharisees, who charged Him with having violated, in the performance of this miracle, the rest of the holy Sabbath: and He declared to them, in terms which called forth their warmest indignation, the mysterious dignity of His person, and the peculiar and intimate relation in which He stood to the Eternal Father.* The purpose

* John v.

which they then formed, to take away His life, they had ever since cherished; and as they heard, from time to time, of the impression produced by His teaching and miracles in Galilee, their minds, instead of being subdued to reverential feeling, or brought to inquire with candour into the evidences of His claims, were filled with envy and dislike. As often as any of the great festivals occurred, they eagerly sought Him in Jerusalem;* and great was their disappointment when they found that He did not afford them an opportunity of accomplishing their malignant design.

The feast of tabernacles was now at hand; and our Lord resolved again to go up to the metropolis, and faithfully to declare to its guilty inhabitants, and especially to the chief priests and Pharisees, the great truths on which He was accustomed to dwell, before He should pay His last visit to it, to suffer and die. But as He seemed to linger at Capernaum, some of His relatives according to the flesh, who had beheld with astonishment His works of power, but had not entered into the spiritual meaning of His discourses, or believed in Him as the Saviour of sinners, expostulated with Him on the inconsistency of remaining in comparative obscurity, instead of displaying His glory in the capital itself. Jesus replied to them, “ My time is not yet come: but your time is always ready. The world cannot hate you; but Me it hateth, because I testify of it, that the works thereof are evil. Go ye up unto this feast: I go not up yet unto this feast; for My time is not yet fully come.”† The brethren, or cousins, of our Lord, went forward to Jerusalem: and, at length, He Himself

* John vii. 11.

† John vii. 6—8.

set out for that city, not accompanied by a large number of His more serious hearers, but in a private and retired manner.* About the middle of the feast, He appeared in the temple, and taught; and the depth of wisdom which His discourse evinced, and the peculiar authority by which it was distinguished, awakened the astonishment of many who listened to it.† In the conversation which followed with some of the unbelieving Jews, He manifested a sacred boldness and dignity. He affirmed, that His doctrine had the sanction of the Eternal Father, and that it must commend itself to every mind anxious to do the will of God, and to enjoy communion with Him. He spoke of the purpose which some among them had formed, to take away His life; and charged them with having thus violated, in spirit and intention, one of the most important precepts of that law which they professed to revere. He referred to the miracle of healing which He had performed when last He visited Jerusalem, and to the feeling of hostility towards Him which it had provoked; and He exposed the fallacy of the plea on which they grounded their opposition to His claims.‡

Many of the inhabitants of Jerusalem, who well knew the settled purpose of the chief priests and Pharisees to kill the distinguished Prophet of Galilee, should He again appear among them, and thus place Himself in their power, were surprised when they heard Him speaking with boldness, and saw that His most malignant enemies did not attempt to seize Him. Some even began to inquire, "Do the rulers know indeed that this is the very Messiah?" and then, repressing their rising con-

* John vii. 9, 10. † John vii. 14, 15. ‡ John vii. 16—24.

victions, added, "Howbeit we know this man whence he is: but when the Messiah cometh, no man knoweth whence He is." Others yielded to their convictions; and, remembering how His whole career had been marked by works of power and love, said, in justification of their confidence, "When the Messiah cometh, will He do more miracles than these which this man hath done?"*

The Pharisees and chief priests were now apprised of the impression which had been produced on the multitude, by the teaching and manner of our Lord; and they sent officers to apprehend Him. In their presence, Jesus adverted to His approaching removal from the sight of men. He intimated, that it was only for a little while that He should be with them, and that He should then depart to the Father, having fulfilled the purpose of His mission to our world. Though He now restrained the malice of His enemies, and caused a secret awe to rest upon their minds, which kept them from offering violence to His person; He well knew that the period was drawing near, when He should for the last time teach in that guilty city, and should yield Himself up to suffering and death. This truth He now declared, in language which was obscure and mysterious to many who heard it, but which to us appears beautifully clear and appropriate.†

On the last day of the feast of tabernacles, which was emphatically "the *great* day of the feast," the Redeemer stood forth amidst the assembled thousands of Israel, and called their attention to Himself as the Fountain of spiritual blessing. It is probable, that the imposing

* John vii. 25—31.

† John vii. 32—36.

ceremony of drawing water from the fountain of Siloam, and carrying it to the temple to be poured out at the foot of the altar, had just taken place, the people singing,—“Therefore with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation,”—when Jesus stood forth, and uttered the memorable words:—“If any man thirst, let him come unto Me, and drink. He that believeth on Me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.”* This brief address is rich in spiritual instruction. It leads us to contemplate our Lord as the Source of that water of life, which only can allay the thirst of the human spirit. It points out the method of salvation,—even a *personal coming* to Him under a consciousness of need. And it declares the fulness of that gracious influence of the Holy Ghost, which He should vouchsafe from the throne of His glory to His believing people, to purify their hearts, and render them instruments of blessing to all around.

A powerful sensation was produced by these words of the Redeemer among the assembled multitude. Some of them said, “Of a truth this is the Prophet.” Others said explicitly, “This is the Messiah.” But some of them asked, “Shall the Messiah come out of Galilee? Hath not the Scripture said, that the Messiah cometh of the seed of David, and out of the town of Bethlehem, where David was?”† Among the enemies of Jesus there were individuals who would gladly have seized Him: but a secret awe restrained them, and even the officers who were sent by the chief priests and Pharisees returned to them, and frankly confessed that they were so affected with the majesty of His teaching, that they could not

* John vii. 37, 38: see also verse 39. † John vii. 40—42.

draw near to apprehend Him.* But the perverse and haughty spirits of these men were only roused to a more intense dislike of Jesus, mixed with a bitter contempt for all who acknowledged His claims, or even treated Him with respect. They disdainfully replied to the officers, "Are ye also deceived? Have any of the rulers or of the Pharisees believed on him? But this people who knoweth not the law are cursed." Nicodemus, who was a member of the council, here interposed, and mildly asked, "Doth our law judge any man before it hear him, and know what he doeth?" Instantly they upbraided him as a follower of the Galilean, and said, "Art thou also of Galilee? Search and look: for out of Galilee ariseth no prophet."†

When the feast of tabernacles was over, our Lord continued for a while in Jerusalem, or its immediate neighbourhood; and frequently visited the temple, to deliver His doctrine, and affirm His claims, even in the presence of His inveterate enemies. His conduct also evinced the more than human dignity and benevolence of His character, though the display of these qualities frequently incensed the chief priests and elders still more against Him. He showed His wisdom, His profound insight into human character, His hatred to sin, and His pitying kindness, in the manner in which He treated the case of the woman taken in adultery, whom the Scribes and Pharisees brought before Him. He did not lay Himself open to their accusations, by pronouncing a sentence which might seem to set aside the law of Moses: but He touched their consciences by the emphatic words, "He that is without

* John vii. 44—46.

† John vii. 47—53.

sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her;" and when they had retired one by one, He said to the woman, ashamed and troubled as she was, "Hath no man condemned thee?" And when she replied, "No man, Lord;" He added, "Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more;"—thus reminding her of the guilt of her conduct, and charging her henceforth to walk in the paths of chastity and peace.*

But the sayings of our Lord, at this period, relative to His own person and work, demand our earnest attention. As He stood in the temple, surrounded by many who were disposed to listen candidly to His teaching, and by others who were ready to cavil at anything which might appear to them extravagant or inconsistent, He uttered the remarkable words, "I am the Light of the world: he that followeth Me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life."† This was a claim which only a Divine Person, manifested to save and bless our fallen world, could put forth. For ages a deep gloom had rested upon the mass of mankind; and the human spirit, harassed by its disappointments and sorrows, and oppressed with the load of its guilt, had not been able to discover the way of life and peace. Philosophy had tried in vain to unfold the truths which relate to the Divine nature and government, and to find a sure ground of repose and comfort for the human mind. The light which had shone upon our world, had been derived from the earlier revelations of God, and from the sacred writings and the instructive types of the Jewish church: but all these had pointed to a yet clearer discovery of truth

* John viii. 2—11.

† John viii. 12.

and grace, to be afforded by Him in whom “all the nations of the earth should be blessed.” That glorious Deliverer now stood in His temple; and His teaching was to shed light upon the world through every succeeding age, while His approaching sacrifice was to throw open the way of salvation to every humble and believing mind. He was “the Sun of righteousness,” whose diffusive rays should penetrate the darkness of every land, and impart life, and comfort, and strength, to the distressed and fainting soul. With beautiful propriety, therefore, the Saviour could declare, “I am the Light of the world,” and assure all His followers that He would conduct them even to eternal life. But such a declaration was not likely to pass without opposition from the Pharisees who stood around Him; and they objected, that He bore witness of Himself, and that His witness was not true. The Saviour replied, that although He bore witness of Himself, yet His statements were perfectly true; and He appealed to the heavenly dignity of His Person,—the intimate union between Himself and the Father,—and the testimony which the Father continually bore to Him, though their darkened and sensual minds were not prepared to apprehend or embrace it.*

After a pause, the Saviour resumed His address, and, referring to His approaching removal from them, admonished them, that if they continued obstinately to reject His claims, they would die in their sins, and be eternally banished from His presence. Even now the scene of the cross was present to His view, together with the bright demonstration of His glory which His

* John viii. 13—20.

resurrection would afford. In the anticipation of these events, He declared, "When ye have lifted up the Son of man, then shall ye know that I am He, and that I do nothing of Myself; but as My Father hath taught Me, I speak these things. And He that sent Me is with Me: the Father hath not left Me alone; for I do always those things that please Him."*

The Redeemer now addressed those who believed on Him, and charged them to "*continue* in His word," that they might indeed be His disciples, and enjoy that spiritual *freedom* which only His truth and grace could impart. But the Jews who continued hostile to Him, regarded this promise of freedom as involving a reflection upon themselves, and said with indignation, "We be Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man: how sayest thou, Ye shall be made free?" This led to a conversation, in which our Lord affirmed many profound and weighty truths. He began by saying, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant," or slave, "of sin." Thus did He point out to them, that, however they might glory in their supposed liberty, they were really in a state of spiritual bondage; and then He showed them that it was only Himself, the Son, who could make them "free indeed." He admitted that they were the natural descendants of Abraham; but He admonished them, that they were *not*, in the highest and best sense, his *children*,—that, as to their moral character, they were rather "of their father the devil,"—and He appealed, in proof of this, to the purpose which they were even then cherishing to take away His life, though

* John viii. 21—30.

His ministry among them ought rather to have made Him the object of their esteem and love. His teaching, He affirmed, could not fail to attract every spiritual mind,—every mind that was “of God,” that sought His friendship as its first and highest good, and was prepared to welcome the disclosures of His will.*

These declarations exasperated the Pharisees; and they replied insultingly, “Say we not well that thou art a Samaritan, and hast a devil?” Jesus meekly answered, “I have not a devil; but I honour My Father, and ye do dishonour Me.” Then, in the presence of them all, He added the startling but consolatory truth, “Verily, verily, I say unto you, If a man keep My saying, he shall never see death.” To the believer, who continues in the word of Christ, death comes not in its natural horror, as the unmitigated curse, but is only the passage to eternal life and blessedness. The wisdom and love of Him who reigns in our nature arrange its circumstances; and His grace enables the dying saint to triumph in the final conflict. He resigns his body to the tomb under the security of the Redeemer’s covenant, assured of a glorious and happy resurrection; and his spirit passes to be with Christ Himself, and to enjoy His eternal friendship. But the Jews could not enter into these profound and spiritual views; and, eagerly taking hold of the words of our Lord as inconsistent and absurd, they said to Him, “Now we know that thou hast a devil. Abraham is dead, and the prophets; and thou sayest, If a man keep My saying, he shall never taste of death. Art thou greater than our father Abraham which is dead? and

* John viii. 31—47.

the prophets are dead: whom makest thou thyself?" The Saviour replied, that the glory and power which He claimed were those which the Eternal Father Himself attributed to Him; and, referring to Abraham, He declared, that that holy patriarch had looked forward, with earnest desire and exulting hope, to brighter discoveries of "His day," and that when such discoveries were vouchsafed to him, his spirit greatly rejoiced. The Pharisees immediately answered, "Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham?" and then our Lord gave utterance to the memorable words, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am." This was a distinct avowal of His own pre-existence and Divine glory; and the Jews, who regarded Him as having spoken blasphemy, "took up stones to cast at Him," that they might at once terminate His earthly course. But He restrained their malice, and, concealing Himself miraculously from their view, departed from the temple, leaving them to ponder the sayings which had fallen from His lips.*

It appears to have been about this time, that our Lord gave sight to a man who had been blind from his birth. As He was passing along on the Sabbath, His attention was called to this person by some of His disciples, who proposed the question, "Master, who did sin, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" Our Lord replied, that his blindness was not to be ascribed to either of these causes, but was rather permitted in order that in his case the works of God might be gloriously displayed. And then He added, "I must work the works of Him that sent Me, while it is day:

* John viii. 48—59.

the night cometh, when no man can work. As long as I am in the world, I am the Light of the world." When He had said this, "He spat on the ground, and made clay of the spittle, and anointed the eyes of the blind man with the clay, and said unto him, Go, wash in the pool of Siloam." The afflicted man obeyed this direction; and, having washed in that pool, returned possessed of sight.* Here we are again reminded, that the Saviour reserves it to Himself to decide upon the mode and circumstances of His gracious interpositions on behalf of His people. He had often given sight to the blind by a touch or a word; but in this instance He saw fit to employ means, which had no natural tendency to bring about the result, but which His own almighty energy rendered effectual. By adopting this course, He put to the test the faith and submission of the man on whose behalf He was about to exert His gracious power; and the issue showed the blessedness of a simple reliance on His word, and an instant obedience to His command.

This miracle produced a great sensation among the inhabitants of Jerusalem. Those who had known the blind man from his childhood, and had long observed him as he sat begging, were astonished to find him possessed of sight; and some of them could scarcely believe that it was indeed he. But he assured them that he was the person whom they had known so well, and told them the process by which Jesus had given him sight.† Some of them now brought him before the assembled council. Here the question was formally proposed to him, by what means he had received sight; and with great simplicity and distinctness he repeated

* John ix. 1—7.

† John ix. 8—12.

his statement. Some members of the council immediately fixed upon the circumstance, that this miracle was performed on the Sabbath, as sufficient to justify them in altogether rejecting the claims of Jesus: but others replied, "How can a man who is a sinner do such miracles?" They next called the parents of the blind man, and inquired of them what were the real facts of the case. They attested the blindness of their son, even from his birth, but referred the council to himself for information as to the means by which he had obtained his sight. They feared to enter fully upon the subject, or to avow their own belief in the Divine mission of Jesus; since it was the known resolution of the Sanhedrim to excommunicate any person who should openly acknowledge Him as the Messiah. Again calling the man who had been born blind, they said to him, "Give God the praise: we know that this man is a sinner." But his spirit was too grateful for the blessing which he had received, thus coldly to dismiss the claims of the illustrious Prophet; and, in the conversation which followed between him and the council, he dwelt upon the fact that Jesus had given him sight, as clearly proving that He was indeed "of God." The assembled Pharisees were irritated beyond measure, that one whom they had been accustomed to regard with contempt, as bearing in his very person the marks of the Divine displeasure, should thus presume to remonstrate with them; and scornfully addressing him, "Thou wast altogether born in sins, and dost thou teach us?" they thrust him away, and declared him excommunicated.*

* John ix. 13—34.

After this, Jesus met him ; and, aware of the treatment which he had received from the council, said to him, “Dost thou believe on the Son of God ?” The man replied, “Who is He, Lord, that I might believe on Him ?” Jesus answered, “Thou hast both seen Him, and it is He that talketh with thee.” Conviction instantly flashed on his candid mind ; and beholding in the person of his Benefactor, not only a Prophet whose miracles attested His Divine commission, but by His own avowal the Son of God manifested in our nature, he immediately replied, “Lord, I believe,” and worshipped Him. The Saviour received this worship as an expression of his sincere and lively faith ; and then uttered the remarkable words, “For judgment I am come into this world, that they which see not might see, and that they which see might be made blind.”* Thus did He intimate, that while His appearance on earth was a source of blessing to the afflicted and sorrowful, and shed the light of truth on many minds involved in darkness and error, it would form the occasion of judicial blindness to those who cherished a feeling of self-sufficiency, and gloried in their knowledge and attainments.

After some interval, but while the impression of this miracle was fresh upon the minds of the people,† our Lord spoke of Himself as “the good Shepherd,” and as the “door,” by which the devout and humble are admitted to the privileges of the people of God, and every true Minister is introduced to the high and momentous duties of the pastorate.‡ By these comparisons, He illustrated the necessity of a living faith in

* John ix. 35—39.

† This is evident from John x. 21.

‡ John x. 1—18.

Himself on the part of all who profess to be His; and more especially, on the part of those who are engaged in watching over the souls of others. He illustrated, also, His *deep and tender regard for His believing people*. As the ancient shepherds knew their sheep individually, so as to call each by its particular name,—led them forth to proper pasturage,—and continued with them, to guard them from every danger; so He loves *all* who follow Him,—provides for their nourishment and comfort,—and shelters them when the adversaries of their peace would approach to destroy or scatter them. But the love of the Saviour to His people appears, yet more clearly, in the giving up of Himself to death for their salvation. He claimed to be emphatically “the good Shepherd,” since He was about to lay down His life for His sheep. Thus did He carry forward the minds of His hearers to His approaching sufferings; affirming, at the same time, that the surrender of Himself to death would be *voluntary*,—that, should He choose to exert His unbounded power, no man could take away His life,—but that He would “lay it down,” to accomplish the purposes of the Eternal Father, and that He “might take it again,” so as to establish for ever the validity of His claims. The people listened with astonishment to these declarations. Some of them, who had no relish for spiritual truth, exclaimed, “He hath a devil, and is mad: why hear ye him?” Others, who perceived a depth of meaning and a heavenly power in His discourses, though they could not comprehend their full import, said, “These are not the words of him that hath a devil. Can a devil open the eyes of the blind?”*

* John x. 19—21.

It is probable that our Lord continued in the neighbourhood of Jerusalem until the feast of dedication,—a feast which occurred about two months after that of tabernacles, and which was instituted by Judas Maccabæus, to commemorate the purification of the temple and altar, after their desecration by Antiochus Epiphanes. That feast had now arrived; and the Redeemer appeared again in the temple. It was the month of December, and Jesus walked in the portico, which was still called after Solomon, the illustrious monarch who first built the temple of Jehovah. Several of the Jews gathered around Him, and said, “How long dost thou make us to doubt? If thou be the Messiah, tell us plainly.”* The Saviour replied, “I told you, and ye believed not;” and then proceeded to speak of the works of power which He performed in His Father’s name, as sufficiently establishing the claim which He had repeatedly put forth to be the Messiah and the Son of God. He referred, also, to His former discourse relative to Himself as the Shepherd of His people; pointed out the moral obliquity which kept them from believing on Him; and enlarged on the privileges and blessings of His humble and devoted followers:—“But ye believe not, because ye are not of My sheep, as I said unto you. My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me: and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand. My Father, which gave them Me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of My Father’s hand. I and My Father are One.”† This last declaration called forth the intense displeasure of the Jews around Him. They

* John x. 22—24.

† John x. 25—30.

perceived that it implied a participation of Divine perfections, and instantly they “ took up stones to stone Him;” but the Saviour restrained their violence, and mildly expostulated with them : “ Many good works have I showed you from My Father ; for which of those works do ye stone Me ?” They replied, “ For a good work we stone thee not ; but for blasphemy ; and because that thou, being a man, makest thyself God.” The Saviour answered, “ Is it not written in your law, ‘ I said, Ye are gods ?’ If he called them gods unto whom the word of God came, (and the Scripture cannot be broken,) say ye of Him whom the Father hath sanctified, and sent into the world, Thou blasphemest, because I said, I am the Son of God ? If I do not the works of My Father, believe Me not. But if I do, though ye believe not Me, believe the works : that ye may know, and believe, that the Father is in Me, and I in Him.”* In these words—while the Redeemer addressed to them an argument, calculated to lessen the prejudice with which they looked upon One who appeared among them in the lowness of manhood, claiming a participation of the Divine glory—He again affirmed the peculiar and exclusive dignity of His own person. He spoke of Himself as emphatically the Sent of the Father, and the Holy One ; He renewed the declaration, that He was the Son of God, between whom and the Father there existed an intimate and ineffable union ; and He appealed to His miracles as establishing the truth of all His statements. The Jews, perceiving that He continued to advance His loftiest claims, again sought to lay hands upon Him ; but He eluded their attempts, and retired from among

* John x. 31—38.

them.* He even left Judæa, and retired for a little while to Bethabara, where John at first baptized; and many who resorted to Him there, and saw His miracles, were brought to confide in Him as the Saviour of the world.†

The Redeemer had not been long in Bethabara, when He received a message from a family in Bethany,—a village within two miles of Jerusalem,—apprising Him of the dangerous illness of one of their number, towards whom He had manifested a peculiar affection. It is probable, that in the interval between the feast of tabernacles and that of the dedication, Jesus had often visited Bethany, and had been welcomed by Lazarus and his sisters, Mary and Martha. Lazarus was now sinking under a fatal disease; and that home, which was usually the abode of peace and cheerfulness, was involved in gloom and sadness. As all human means had proved ineffectual to arrest the progress of the malady, the only hope of the distressed sisters was in the power of that illustrious Prophet, whose disciples they had become, and who had ever shown to them an affectionate regard. Though He was now at so great a distance, they thought it possible, that if they could only apprise Him of the dangerous state of Lazarus, He might arrive in time to avert the calamity which they dreaded. But Jesus designed to afford, both to them and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, a yet more signal proof of His almighty energy; and, instead of hastening to Bethany, where His presence was so eagerly desired, He remained two days in the place where He was.‡ At the expiration of that time, He stated to His disciples His intention to go into

* John x. 39.

† John x. 40—42.

‡ John xi. 1—6.

Judæa, and to visit the scene of affliction and sorrow. They expostulated with Him as to the danger which He would incur; but He intimated to them that His life was secure until the appointed period of His public labours should have expired; and then adverted, in terms of great sweetness and condescension, to the miracle which He was about to perform:—"Our friend Lazarus sleepeth; but I go, that I may awake him out of sleep." His disciples did not at first comprehend His meaning; and then our Lord, to whom all that passed at Bethany was known and obvious, said to them plainly, "Lazarus is dead; and I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, to the intent ye may believe; nevertheless let us go unto him." Thomas, addressing his fellow-disciples, replied, "Let us also go, that we may die with Him."*

When the Redeemer arrived at Bethany, the remains of His friend had already been committed to the grave four days. The house of Martha and Mary presented an affecting spectacle. The deep sorrow of the sisters expressed itself in frequent weeping; and several of the inhabitants of Jerusalem, who were intimate with the family, were there to sympathise with them, and to minister to their comfort. When the approach of Jesus was announced, Martha, with characteristic energy, went and met Him; but Mary, oppressed with grief, sat still in the house. The address of Martha to the Saviour evinced her faith in His power, and disclosed the intense solicitude with which His arrival had been anticipated:—"Lord, if Thou hadst been here, my brother had not died. But I know, that even now, whatsoever Thou wilt ask of God, God will give it Thee." Jesus imme-

* John xi. 7—16.

dately said to her, "Thy brother shall rise again." Martha, who scarcely dared to hope that He would *now* recall her brother from the tomb, answered, "I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day;" and then our Lord gave utterance to the animating truth, "I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in Me, though he die, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth in Me, shall never die. Believest thou this?" Martha, whose faith in the loftiest claims of Jesus had long been firm and settled, distinctly replied, "Yea, Lord: I believe that Thou art the Messiah, the Son of God, which should come into the world."* Immediately she returned home, and, with a heart lightened and filled with hope, said to her sister secretly, "The Master is come, and calleth for thee." Mary instantly arose and went unto Him. The Jews who were with her in the house, observing her rise up hastily, said, "She goeth unto the grave to weep there;" and, without delay, followed her, to alleviate, if possible, her distress. Mary threw herself at the feet of the Redeemer, and with many tears, addressed Him as her sister had done, "Lord, if Thou hadst been here, my brother had not died." Jesus looked upon her as she wept, and upon the weeping company around her, and His deepest sympathies were moved. He Himself "groaned in spirit, and was troubled." But soon He threw a ray of hope on the mournful scene, by inquiring, "Where have ye laid him?" They asked Him to go with them to the tomb; and as He went, the rush of sorrowful emotions within His breast caused Him to weep, so that the Jews who were near Him, exclaimed, "Behold how he loved

* John xi. 17—27.

him!" Some of them, perceiving the sorrow which filled the mind of our Lord, and remembering the miracle which had recently caused so great a sensation in Jerusalem, said among themselves, "Could not this man, who opened the eyes of the blind, have caused that even this man should not have died?"*

Jesus now came to the tomb. It was a cave, the entrance to which was closed up with a large stone. Jesus said to them, "Take ye away the stone." Martha, in whose mind hope and fear seem to have prevailed alternately, reminded Him, that her brother's remains had already been committed to the sepulchre four days, and must now be offensive. Jesus replied, in terms of encouragement and admonition, "Said I not unto thee, that, if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God?" The stone was removed; and our Lord, lifting up His eyes to heaven, said, "Father, I thank Thee that Thou hast heard Me. And I knew that Thou hearest Me always: but, because of the people which stand by, I said it, that they may believe that Thou hast sent Me." Then, with a voice of majesty and power, He cried, "Lazarus, come forth;" and instantly Lazarus came forth, and the scene of lamentation and woe was changed into one of gladness and holy triumph.†

Many of the Jews who were present yielded to the conviction which this miracle could not fail to produce in every thoughtful mind, and believed on Jesus as the great Restorer. Others went to the Pharisees, and reported the astonishing event, as one which must cause a great sensation throughout the city. The Sanhedrin

* John xi. 28—37.

† John xi. 38—44.

was assembled, to deliberate on the steps which should be taken on the occasion. Many of the members eagerly said, "What do we? for this man doeth many miracles. If we let him thus alone, all men will believe on him; and the Romans shall come and take away both our place and nation." Caiaphas, the high priest, advised that He should be put to death: and, in giving this counsel, used remarkable language,—the Holy Spirit controlling his mind, so as to make him unconsciously utter a prediction of the great design of the Redeemer's death. "Ye know," he said, "nothing at all, nor consider that it is expedient for us, that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not." The evangelist, after recording these words, immediately adds, "And this spake he not of himself: but being high priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus should die for that nation; and not for that nation only, but also that He should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad."*

It was now the fixed and settled purpose of the Pharisees of Jerusalem to take away, by some means, the life of our Lord. But Jesus, whose ministry was yet to be prolonged for a few months, and whose great sacrificial offering was to be presented at the time of the paschal solemnity, did not expose Himself to their malice. He retired to Ephraim, a city near to the wilderness; and, after continuing there with His disciples for a short time,† returned to Galilee, that He might again proclaim in its towns and villages the truths that relate to the kingdom of God, and then go up to Jerusalem, to suffer and to die.

* John xi. 45—52.

† John xi. 54.

CHAPTER X.

THE REDEEMER'S LAST CIRCUIT THROUGH GALILEE, WITH
HIS FINAL JOURNEY TO JERUSALEM.

WHEN the Lord Jesus returned from Judæa to the northern district of the Holy Land, there appear to have been about two months to the feast of the Passover. From the very time of His arrival in Galilee, He began to make preparations for an extended journey through that district and part of Samaria,—a journey which was to be continued through the coasts of Judæa, and to terminate with His entrance into Jerusalem, at the time of the paschal solemnity, there to accomplish by the offering up of Himself the work of atonement.*

One of these preparatory arrangements was to send forth seventy of His disciples, in companies of two and two, to the several towns and villages which He intended personally to visit. The charge addressed to them corresponded, in many particulars, to that which He had given to the twelve, on a former mission; and the substance of their announcements was to be, that “the kingdom of God” was about to be established in its fulness of spiritual blessing, and that its privileges were brought “nigh” to every humble and earnest mind. But while the Saviour gave them this commission, He reflected, with sorrowful emotions, on the impenitence and perverseness of multitudes that immediately sur-

* Luke ix. 51, compared with xiii. 22, and xvii. 11.

rounded Him; and He repeated, with a slight modification, His pathetic exclamation over the cities which had enjoyed the largest share of His personal labours. “Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works had been done in Tyre and Sidon, which have been done in you, they had a great while ago repented, sitting in sackcloth and ashes. But it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the judgment, than for you. And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted to heaven, shalt be thrust down to hell.”*

When the seventy returned to our Lord, after fulfilling their mission, they acknowledged, with gratitude and joy, the wonders which they had been enabled to effect through His almighty name. They said to Him, “Lord, even the devils are subject unto us through Thy name.” The Saviour’s reply was impressive and admonitory. He declared to them the fearful shock which the kingdom of Satan was about to receive; He assured them of the infinite resources which He, their Lord and Master, possessed within Himself, and which He would use on their behalf; but He taught them, that their joy should be called forth, not so much by the miracles which they had been enabled to perform, as by their *personal interest in His salvation, and their title to the inheritance of heaven.* “I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven. Behold, I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy: and nothing shall by any means hurt you. Notwithstanding in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven.”† As the Redeemer looked upon

* Luke x. 1—16.

† Luke x. 17—20.

these devoted followers of His, and contemplated the wide diffusion of His truth and grace through their instrumentality,—feeble and insignificant as they would appear to many of the wise and learned of the world,—He “rejoiced in spirit,” and again uttered the remarkable and impressive words, “I thank Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes: even so, Father; for so it seemed good in Thy sight. All things are delivered to Me of My Father: and no man knoweth who the Son is, but the Father; and who the Father is, but the Son, and he to whom the Son will reveal Him.”* Then, turning to His disciples, He said, “Blessed are the eyes which see the things that ye see: for I tell you, that many prophets and kings have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them.”†

Almost immediately upon the return of the seventy, our Lord commenced His last general circuit through Galilee. In this journey, He continued His course of public instruction, and still exerted His power to heal. The leading topics of His ministry were those on which He had ever dwelt; and, as circumstances arose, He again inculcated the great truths of religion, and enforced its solemn warnings, in terms similar to those which He had before employed. But He placed many truths in new and affecting aspects; and often did He carry forward the minds of His hearers to the realities of eternity, and seek to arouse the most thoughtless among them to earnest reflection, by reminding them of

* Luke x. 21, 22.

† Luke x. 23, 24.

their final account to God. It will be instructive to advert to some of the incidents of this journey, and the impressive sayings which they drew from the Redeemer's lips.

About the time of its commencement, one of the lawyers or scribes, who wished to try His skill, proposed to Him the question, "Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" Our Lord replied, "What is written in the law? how readest thou?" The lawyer answered, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself." This was, indeed, a beautiful summary of the Divine law, and one which our Lord Himself, on a subsequent occasion, gave; and He now expressed His approval of the reply, and added, "This do, and thou shalt live." The lawyer, unwilling that the conversation should thus terminate, inquired, "And who is my neighbour?" The Redeemer, in reply, delivered the parable of the good Samaritan, who cared for a wounded traveller of another nation, when both a priest and a Levite of his own people had treated him with indifference and neglect.* Thus did He show that our benevolence is not to be restricted to those of our own country or party, but is rather to be extended to every man, of whatever race and faith, who may need our assistance. Thus also did He point out the earnest, practical, and self-denying character of that benevolence which is pleasing to God, and the absence of which must utterly vitiate all pretensions to piety.

Soon after our Lord had entered upon this circuit of Galilee, a circumstance occurred, which led Him to

* Luke x. 25—37.

affirm, in a very impressive manner, *the supreme importance of the care of the soul, and the blessedness of an intense love of Divine truth.* He was entertained in a certain village, by Martha and Mary, the affectionate sisters who usually resided at Bethany, but who appear to have been natives of Galilee, and to have had possessions there.* Martha, who was of an anxious disposition, wishing to do honour to her Guest, exerted herself in making preparations for the entertainment to be given to Him, so as even to bring her mind into a disturbed and harassed state. Mary was eager to catch all the lessons of heavenly wisdom which fell from the lips of the distinguished Prophet; and, as on former occasions, she “sat at Jesus’ feet, and heard His word.” Her sister, grieved that she should thus allow the burden of domestic management to fall upon her alone, came to our Lord, and said, “Lord, dost Thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone? bid her therefore that she help me.” Jesus perceived that Martha was in danger of undue solicitude about earthly things, and needed to have her attention directed more strongly to her own spiritual interests: and He said to her, with great affection and fidelity, “Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things: but one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her.”†

The subject of *prayer* was brought before our Lord,

* This point seems to be satisfactorily established by the Rev. Edward Greswell, in his “Dissertations upon an Harmony of the Gospels.” Vol. II. Diss. 32. *On the village of Martha and Mary.* His reasonings on the subject are, at least, deserving of the most attentive consideration.

† Luke x. 38—42.

by one of His followers, who probably was not present when He delivered the discourse on the Mount. This disciple preferred the request, "Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples." The Saviour repeated the form of prayer which He had before given; and then He dwelt on the importance of a consciousness of need, leading even to *importunate solicitations for blessing*, and unfolded the *willingness of God* to impart to us every spiritual good, and especially to give to us the Holy Spirit.*

The continued opposition of the Pharisees to His claims caused our Lord to reiterate some of His impressive declarations in reply to their cavils, and to set forth, yet more clearly, the state of spiritual destitution in which they were found notwithstanding their high professions, and the awful ruin which awaited them if they remained impenitent and worldly. Some of them again said of Him, "He casteth out devils through Beelzebub, the chief of the devils;" but the Redeemer exposed, as He had before done, the fallacy of such an imputation.† Others sought of Him "a sign from heaven;" but our Lord again referred them to the sign of the prophet Jonah, to be given in His own death and resurrection, and then dwelt, with sorrowful emotions, on the obduracy of that generation.‡ One of the Pharisees, who invited our Lord to dine with him, magnified it into an offence, that He did not wash His hands before eating; and the Saviour, in reply, showed *the vanity of all external ceremonies*, if the *heart* continues *polluted and unholy*. He proceeded to exhibit, with

* Luke xi. 1—13. † Luke xi. 14, 15, 17—23.

‡ Luke xi. 16, 29—32.

fearful impressiveness, the leading sins of the Pharisaic sect; and those also of the Scribes, who claimed to be the expositors of the Divine law, but who openly violated its plainest commands, and cherished feelings of hostility towards every one whose piety was deep and earnest.*

On His disciples He enforced, in the presence of an innumerable multitude of people, many of the admonitions which He had given in former periods of His ministry. He charged them to maintain, at all times, *sincerity* and *truth*, and never to admit the leaven of hypocrisy; assuring them, that a day is approaching, when the real character of men will be exhibited without disguise. He called upon them *never to leave the path of duty*, through the *fear* of any *suffering* which man could inflict; but rather to stand in awe of Him, who bestows the rewards and punishments of the future life. He reminded them of the *benignant care of Divine Providence*, which should be constantly extended over them; He dwelt on the *momentous consequences of fidelity to Himself, or the denial of His name*, when the solemnities of the last judgment should burst upon the world; and He gave them the promise of *special assistance from above*, when placed in circumstances of peculiar difficulty and trial.†

This impressive course of observations appears to have been interrupted by a request preferred by an individual from among the multitude:—"Master, speak to my brother, that he divide the inheritance with me." With this request the Saviour could not consistently comply; and He reproved the person who applied to Him, for supposing that He would assume the office of a civil

* Luke xi. 37—52.

† Luke xii. 1—12.

magistrate, or interfere in secular disputes. But this incident suggested a solemn admonition relative to *the guilt of covetousness*, and the folly and danger of those who devote their energies to the acquisition of worldly property, while they neglect their spiritual interests, and make no preparation for the coming eternity. Such an admonition the Redeemer now urged on all who were present; and, by one of His most affecting parables, He showed how easily the cherished hopes and plans of worldly men may be frustrated by the summons of God, calling them into His presence, and terminating for ever their connexion with earth.*

Then, turning to His disciples, He resumed His exhortations, seeking both to establish their *confidence in the care of their heavenly Father*, and to impress on them the necessity of *habitual watchfulness* and *effort*. He directed them to contemplate the universal agency of God, reminding them that it is His hand which invests nature with loveliness, and supplies the wants of every living thing; and assuring them that His benevolent regard is more especially placed on His devout and obedient people.† He called upon them ever to bear in mind their stewardship to Himself, and to live with a reference to their final account. He admonished them, that the duties assigned to them were high and sacred, and that the punishment of unfaithfulness would be in proportion to the greatness of their trust, while the reward of fidelity and persevering effort would be rich and glorious.‡ He adverted, as on a former occasion, to the conflicts of principle which the diffusion of His

* Luke xii. 13—21. † Luke xii. 22—31.

‡ Luke xii. 35—48.

religion would induce, especially when His great sacrifice should have been actually offered, and His claims, in all their grandeur, should be proclaimed throughout the world. To the propitiatory sufferings which were before Him He looked forward with solemn interest, as essential to the recovery of man, and the establishment of the perfect economy of grace. With deep and peculiar emotions He now exclaimed, "I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!"*

About the time in which our Lord addressed these admonitions to His disciples, some individuals mentioned to Him the case of certain Galileans, whom Pilate had slain when they came up to the temple, so as to mingle their blood with their sacrifices. In reply, the Saviour said, "Suppose ye that these Galileans were sinners above all the Galileans, because they suffered such things? I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." He adverted, in a similar manner, to the case of eighteen persons who had been killed by the falling of a tower in Siloam; and then added the affecting parable of the barren fig-tree, illustrative of the state of impenitence in which the men of that generation were found, though they had enjoyed, for nearly three years, the advantage of His personal ministry,—and premonitory of the utter ruin that would fall upon them, if they continued careless and obdurate, when the Spirit should be poured out from on high, in honour of His perfect atonement, and the message of mercy should be declared to them by His apostles, in all its fulness and power.† But these sayings of our Lord, though they had a special application to the

* Luke xii. 49—53.

† Luke xiii. 1—9.

people around Him, must be regarded as embracing general truths of deep and permanent interest. They remind *us*, that we are not to estimate the character of men by the outward calamities which fall upon them;—that severe and overwhelming visitations of wrath may be in reserve for those who now enjoy a measure of temporal prosperity, but whose hearts are alienated from God, and hardened against the calls of His grace;—and that the long-suffering of the Most High, great as it is, has its limits, and, when these are reached, even the voice which interceded for mercy will concur in the sentence of destruction.

In the course of this journey, our Lord again affirmed those principles relative to *the Sabbath* which He had uniformly maintained, and especially showed that works of mercy are allowable and proper on the day of sacred rest. As He was teaching in one of the synagogues on the Sabbath, He gave instant soundness and health to a woman who had been “bowed together” by Satanic power for eighteen years, and “could in no wise lift up herself.” The ruler of the synagogue, grieved and indignant at this action, said to the people, “There are six days in which men ought to work: in them therefore come and be healed, and not on the Sabbath-day.” The Saviour exposed the fallacy of this objection to the miracle which He had performed; and showed that, if even the inferior animals are objects of regard and solicitude on the Sabbath, surely “a daughter of Abraham” might be restored to health on that day, in perfect consistency with its holy character.*

On another occasion, an individual proposed to Him

* Luke xiii. 10—17.

the question, “Lord, are there few that be saved?” To this inquiry He did not give a direct reply; but, addressing all who stood around Him, He solemnly charged them to put forth earnest and constant effort in order to the personal attainment of everlasting life. Instead of encouraging the disposition to treat the momentous subject of salvation as one of curious speculation, the Redeemer sought rather to fix the minds of men on their individual accountability, and the eternal realities which must soon burst upon their view: and He reminded them, that the time would come, when many who had enjoyed on earth great religious privileges, but had lived in the practice of iniquity, would apply in vain to be admitted to the joys of His people in heaven.*

When this incident occurred, our Lord was in the territories of Herod; and some of the Pharisees, with an affected solicitude for His safety, came to Him, and said, “Get thee out, and depart hence: for Herod will kill thee.” The Saviour’s answer showed, that, while He felt secure from any attempts of Herod, He looked forward habitually to His approaching death,—but that the scene of that death was to be the guilty metropolis, which was already stained with the blood of the prophets of God. And He uttered the affecting exclamation, “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee; how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate: and verily I say unto you, Ye shall not see Me, until the time come

* Luke xiii. 23—30.

when ye shall say, Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord.”*

We have already seen that, although the feelings of the Pharisees generally towards our Lord were bitter and malignant, some of them, in the course of this journey, invited Him to their table. Even when they did so, however, they looked upon Him with suspicion, and were eager to catch at any deviation, on His part, from their established customs. The evangelist who has furnished us with so many incidents of this period of the Redeemer’s ministry, has related that one of the chief Pharisees, about this time, invited Him to eat bread with him, and that the invitation was accepted. It was the Sabbath, and many of the Pharisees and Scribes were present, to listen to the words, and observe the deportment, of the great Teacher. The first act of our Lord was, to heal a man labouring under the dropsy, who was present; and, knowing that this would appear to many to involve a violation of the Sabbath rest, He vindicated the act by the clear and simple reasoning which He was accustomed to employ in defence of works of mercy on that holy day.† Observing the eagerness with which many of the guests sought the most honourable places, He addressed them all on the importance of *humility*, and affirmed the truth, “Whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.”‡ Next, turning to His host, He inculcated an important principle, which should govern the conduct of those to whom God has entrusted this world’s good. That principle was, that, instead of spending

* Luke xiii. 31—35.

† Luke xiv. 1—6.

‡ Luke xiv. 7—11.

their affluence in honouring their rich neighbours and friends, they should rather care for “the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind.” He reminded all who were present, that it was in the power of opulent friends to return their liberality; but that the kindness which they showed to the poor and distressed would be remembered by God, and, if their hearts were devoted to Him, would be “recompensed at the resurrection of the just.”* One of the company, who had been listening attentively to the Redeemer’s words, now exclaimed, “Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God!” Our Lord, in reply, delivered an impressive parable relative to the blessings of that kingdom. He showed, that many of those who had been invited beforehand to partake of them, would treat them with neglect, through their devotion to secular interests and pleasures; and that, while *they* stood aloof from the salvation of God, the offers of mercy would be proclaimed to others who had been regarded as aliens and outcasts, and would by many of these be welcomed and embraced.†

Soon after this, when our Lord had resumed His journey, and “great multitudes” were following Him, He paused, and, turning round, solemnly admonished them all, that if they would indeed be His people, they must love Him above their dearest relatives, and be prepared to sacrifice for His sake every worldly comfort, and even life itself. He called upon them *seriously to deliberate, before entering upon the profession of discipleship to Himself*;—a profession which might expose them to so many hardships and trials; and He pointed out the

* Luke xiv. 12—14.

† Luke xiv. 15—24.

fearful state of those who, while retaining the name of His disciples, are as tasteless salt, being altogether destitute of the savour and power of His grace.*

While these warnings could not fail to awaken anxious thought in the minds of the multitudes around Him, they did not diminish the eagerness which was felt to listen to His instructions. A great number of publicans, and of men who had lived in open sin, including, doubtless, several Gentiles, drew near unto Him to hear Him; so that the Pharisees and Scribes murmured, saying, "This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them." Here, again, the self-complacency of the Pharisaic sect, and their haughty disdain of those beneath them, were most offensively developed; but the Saviour reproved the spirit which they manifested, and, by three instructive parables, showed the *joy* which is called forth in heaven by *the repentance of a sinner*, and *the willingness of God to restore to His favour, and admit to the privileges of His family, every wanderer who returns to Him in the lowly confession of sinfulness and guilt.*† The last of these parables was that of the prodigal son,—one on which our minds may well linger, both on account of the fulness of truth which it embraces, and the beautiful and touching manner in which that truth is suggested. While it throws light on the dispensations of God towards the Gentiles and the Jewish people in past ages, and on their relative position under the perfect Christian economy, it illustrates also the condescending grace with which the Most High meets every returning sinner, and banishes his sorrows and his fears.

These encouraging parables were followed by others of

* Luke xiv. 25—35.

† Luke xv. 1—32.

an admonitory character. Addressing all who professed to be His disciples, the Redeemer again enforced the great principle of their *stewardship to God*, more particularly in relation to *worldly property*; and He called upon them to live with a reference to that state upon which they must enter, when their trust on earth should cease. The parable of the unjust steward, which bore upon these topics, might, to a superficial hearer, have appeared strange and perplexing; but the meaning of our Lord would become apparent to every spiritual and earnest mind. The forethought which He approved and enjoined, was one which could consist with the pure and heavenly principles of the Christian character; for He affirmed, "The children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light," and then went on to show, how fearful an obstacle the love of money, with the want of fidelity to God in the use of it, is to our obtaining the higher and eternal blessings of religion. Many of the Pharisees who were present, and who, notwithstanding their outward sanctity, were covetous and worldly, laughed at these sayings of the Redeemer: but He replied to them, "Ye are they which justify yourselves before men; but God knoweth your hearts: for that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God."* Soon afterwards, He addressed to them and to all His hearers the affecting parable of the rich man and Lazarus. In this He unveiled the realities of the spiritual world; He set forth the existence of the soul, in a state of consciousness and activity, immediately after death; He showed, that a life of worldly indulgence and neglect of God will

* Luke xvi. 1—15.

be followed by future suffering, while many of the poor and destitute, who are truly pious, will rise to ineffable happiness and glory; He affirmed the unchangeable character of those states of retribution, upon which men enter when they leave this earth; and He declared, that if a man closes his eyes against the evidences of that revelation which God has actually given, and hardens his heart against the influences of His grace, no other means can prove effectual to his awakening and conversion.*

As the Saviour continued His journey, He addressed various admonitions to His disciples, calculated to prepare them for the duties and trials of their future career. He charged them to maintain a consistent and holy walk before men, so as never to cast a stumbling-block in the way of any humble believer in Himself, or any sincere inquirer after salvation.† He enjoined on them a frank and open conduct towards each other, and the repeated and cordial forgiveness of an offending brother, who should acknowledge that he had done wrong, and avow his regret and contrition.‡ In reply to the request of the twelve, "Lord, increase our faith," He pointed out the wonders which a lively confidence in Himself would enable them to perform; but reminded them that, however high the services to which they might be called, they could never exceed the limit of their duty, or confer a favour upon God.§

The power of the Redeemer to heal diseases, and to remove the varied forms of human suffering, was frequently manifested in this circuit through Galilee and

* Luke xvi. 19—31. † Luke xvii. 1, 2. ‡ Luke xvii. 3, 4.

§ Luke xvii. 5—10.

part of Samaria. One instance in which it was put forth, about the period at which we have now arrived, has been recorded by St. Luke, in connexion with an impressive remark of our Lord, relative to the duty of evincing gratitude to God for any signal mercy which has been received from Him. As the Saviour approached a certain village, ten persons afflicted with leprosy, and cut off, in consequence of that fearful disease, from intercourse with society generally, stood afar off, and cried unto Him aloud, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us." He said to them, "Go, show yourselves unto the priests." This command tacitly implied, that His power would be put forth to restore them; and though, as yet, no process of healing had commenced, they went, as the Saviour directed them, and their faith was rewarded by the sudden removal of their disease. One of them, when he saw that he was healed, returned, glorifying God with a loud voice; and when he came to the Redeemer, he fell down at His feet, and thanked Him for this interposition of His grace. This person, whose gratitude was so conspicuous above that of his companions, was a Samaritan; and our Lord honoured his feelings and conduct by saying to His disciples, "Were there not ten cleansed? but where are the nine? There are not found that returned to give glory to God, save this stranger." Then addressing the individual himself, He said, "Arise, go thy way: thy faith hath made thee whole."*

Thus was the Redeemer's last visit, as a public Teacher, to the towns and villages of Galilee, distinguished by remarkable displays of His power and love. He scattered blessings wherever He appeared; and gladdened many

* Luke xvii. 11—19.

sorrowful hearts by the removal of loathsome and inveterate diseases. He uttered words of peace, also, to the troubled conscience, and disclosed to every wanderer the path of life. But He warned the careless and impenitent of their approaching ruin, and threw around all His discourses a peculiar solemnity, calculated to leave an indelible impression on every thoughtful mind. His voice was no more to be heard in the synagogues which He now visited, or in the towns through which He passed; but the truths which He taught, would sink deep into many hearts, and be vividly recalled when His apostles should go forth to tell of His sacrificial sufferings, and of His glorious resurrection from the dead.

CHAPTER XI.

THE REDEEMER'S LAST JOURNEY TO JERUSALEM. (CONTINUED.)

OUR Lord was now on His way towards the metropolis of Judæa. He had gone through Galilee, for the last time, proclaiming the truths which relate to "the kingdom of God," and displaying His unbounded power and condescending love; and now He was slowly advancing towards that guilty city, where He was to endure His deepest sufferings, and to die as the sacrifice for human guilt.

His addresses, at this period, to His disciples and the multitude, and His replies to the questions which were

incidentally proposed to Him, embraced many points of deep interest. To some of the Pharisees, for instance, who inquired, when the kingdom of God should come, He answered, "The kingdom of God cometh not with observation: neither shall they say, 'Lo here!' or, 'Lo there!' for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you."^{*} Thus did He emphatically state the truth, that that kingdom, to the establishment of which the pious of every age had looked forward, was not to be one of outward dignity and splendour, but one which should bow the heart to the Divine will, and fill it with heavenly purity and peace. Then, addressing His disciples, He forewarned them, that when the Son of man should come in the revelation of His power and glory, it would be to inflict sudden and overwhelming ruin upon that guilty nation, which had so perversely resisted the overtures of Divine mercy, and was now about to consummate its crimes by rejecting and crucifying Himself.[†] He added a parable, to encourage His people to be earnest and importunate in their supplications to God, assuring them that their prayers should not be disregarded, but that even if the answer of peace were for a while delayed, it should be granted at length, and the special kindness of God towards them should be openly manifested.[‡] Perceiving around Him some who "trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others," He delivered the admonitory yet encouraging parable of the Pharisee and the publican. Impressively did He show, in this parable, how offensive to God is a spirit of haughty self-complacency in prayer, combined, as it ever must be, with low and imperfect

* Luke xvii. 20, 21. † Luke xvii. 22—37. ‡ Luke xviii. 1—8.

views of the spirituality of the Divine law ; and, with equal clearness and power, He disclosed the willingness of God to listen to the sighing of the contrite heart, that renounces every plea of personal merit, and casts itself wholly on the Divine mercy.*

It appears to have been about this time that the Pharisees came to Him with an inquiry relative to the law of *marriage* and *divorce*. Hoping to perplex Him, or to involve Him in some opposition to the authority of Moses, they asked, “Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause?” The Saviour referred them to the original institution of marriage, and the obvious design of God that the tender and endearing bond of the nuptial contract should remain during the earthly life of those whom it has made one. He intimated that polygamy was a departure from the Divine plan, since the conjugal relation was to unite two persons, and two only, as one flesh ; and He expressly affirmed, that this relation can be dissolved only in the case of conjugal unfaithfulness. Thus did He throw additional guards around the sacredness and permanence of an institution which is essential to the peace and welfare of society, and which especially tends to promote and foster the domestic affections, and thus to sweeten the life of man.†

An incident now occurred which placed the *benignity* and *condescension* of the Redeemer in a most affecting point of view. Several persons brought to Him their “little children,” that He should “put His hands on them, and pray.” His disciples, thinking, perhaps, that it was beneath their Master’s dignity to have His time

* Luke xviii. 9—14.

† Matthew xix. 3—12; Mark x. 2—12.

and attention thus occupied, and that such applications, if encouraged, would become very numerous and troublesome, "rebuked those that brought them." But greatly did they mistake the feelings of our Lord towards the infants upon whom His blessing was desired ! He beheld in these infants all that distinguishes the nature of man, and invests that nature with so high importance ; He thought of them as comprehended in the Divine plans of mercy, and interested in that covenant of grace which He came to earth to establish ; and He viewed them as affording an appropriate type of that form of character—humble, docile, and confiding—which all His people must possess. He manifested great displeasure at the conduct of His disciples, and said, with inimitable tenderness and grace, "Suffer the little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not : for of such is the kingdom of God. Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein." Then, taking them up in His arms, He "put His hands upon them, and blessed them."* It was a lovely spectacle, and one on which every thoughtful mind must have gazed with interest. The great Prophet of Israel welcomed these children to His arms, as the proof of His affectionate regard to them, and of the love which He bears to our nature, even in its lowliest and most fragile form.

Another circumstance now took place, which drew from our Lord some of those startling and impressive warnings for which His ministry was so remarkable. A young ruler, possessed of great riches, came to Him, and, kneeling down to Him, said, "Good Master, what shall

* Matthew xix. 13—15 ; Mark x. 13—16 ; Luke xviii. 15—17.

I do, that I may inherit eternal life?" The Saviour first reproved him for applying to Him, as a matter of *compliment*, the epithet "good." Had the use of that epithet been the expression of an enlightened and lively faith in our Lord's more than human dignity and holiness, it is reasonable to conceive that He would have allowed and approved it. That He was justly entitled to it, there can be no doubt; for both at His baptism and on the mount of transfiguration, He had been declared to be the Son of God,—the object of the Father's ineffable complacency and delight. In several instances, also, He had accepted worship offered to Him under that high and glorious character: but He would not sanction the complimentary use of an epithet indicative of perfect excellence, on the part of one who viewed Him only as a distinguished Teacher. In reply to his inquiry relative to the way to eternal life, our Lord referred him to the great precepts of the law as delivered from Mount Sinai; thus recognising their permanent validity, and the obligation which rests on all His people to study and observe them. These precepts the Redeemer came not to impair, but to establish: and while He has opened to us a new way to pardon and acceptance, and has made provision for our receiving the Holy Ghost to sanctify our nature, He calls upon all who come to Him to "walk in newness of life," and evince the reality of the change which they have experienced, by their uniform obedience to the Divine will. But the mind of the young ruler had yet to be impressed with a conviction of its cherished sin. He had from his very childhood regarded the great precepts of the law with reverence, and had sought to obey them; and with

sincerity and openness, though with very imperfect conceptions of the extent and spirituality of the Divine requirements, he replied to our Lord, “ All these have I kept from my youth up: what lack I yet?” The Saviour looked upon him with affectionate interest; and perceiving that the love of riches was the great obstacle to his becoming truly pious, struck at the root of this insidious and fatal evil, by commanding him to go and sell his possessions, and give them to the poor, assuring him that he should have treasure in heaven, and offering to him a place among His own immediate attendants. “ One thing thou lackest: go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, take up the cross, and follow Me.” A fearful struggle must at this moment have had place in the breast of the young ruler: but the love of money triumphed, and he “ went away sorrowful; for he had great possessions.”* The Saviour then, turning to His disciples, adverted with peculiar solemnity to the difficulty which the possession of riches would place in the way of a person’s “ entering into the kingdom of God.” To become the subjects of that kingdom, we must be willing to renounce every earthly good, rather than remain without the Divine friendship: and if God should confide worldly property to our care, we must use it *as a trust*,—not setting our affections upon it, nor making it the object of our confidence, nor wasting it in luxurious self-indulgence, nor holding it with an avaricious grasp; but employing it for His glory, and for the welfare of our fellow-men. And yet, great and almost insurmountable as are the

* Matthew xix. 16—22; Mark x. 17—22; Luke xviii. 18—23.

difficulties which lie in the way of a rich man's attaining the peace and joy of piety, the grace of God can enable him to rise above them all, and can lead him to that humility and faith, and entire devotion to the Divine service, which are essential to the Christian character.*

Peter now adverted to the position of himself and his fellow-apostles, who had "left all" to follow our Lord, and asked, "What shall we have therefore?" The reply of the Saviour was remarkable. It gave prominence to the truth, that the rewards of His service are in every case equal to its high demands; it assured the apostles that their eminence in His spiritual kingdom should be equal to their peculiar toils and dangers; and it affirmed, that all who should for His sake resign their earthly friends and possessions, should enjoy His special care on earth, and, though they should often be the subjects of persecution, should find even here many who would kindly contribute to their comfort, and in the world to come should inherit eternal life. He reminded them, however, that in the administration of His kingdom, and the distribution of the rewards of eternity, the expectations of men would, in many instances, be reversed; and that while all His arrangements and decisions would be those of perfect equity and goodness, "many that were first would be last, and the last first."†

The next incident recorded by the evangelists brings the Redeemer before us disclosing to His apostles the deep feelings of His own mind, and preparing them for those scenes of suffering and shame, through which He

* Matthew xix. 23—26; Mark x. 23—27; Luke xviii. 24—27.

† Matthew xix. 27—30; Mark x. 28—31; Luke xviii. 28—30. See also, in illustration of the last sentiment, Matthew xx. 1—16.

was about to pass. As they were on their way to Jerusalem, He called the twelve aside, and said to them, “Behold, we go up to Jerusalem, and all things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of man shall be accomplished. For He shall be delivered unto the chief priests, and unto the scribes; and they shall condemn Him to death, and shall deliver Him to the Gentiles: and they shall mock Him, and shall scourge Him, and shall spit upon Him, and shall kill Him: and the third day He shall rise again.”* In His former journeys to that metropolis, He had been well aware of the intense hatred which was cherished towards Him by the chief priests and scribes, and of their settled purpose to take away His life: but hitherto He had seen fit to restrain their malice, and to overawe, by the majesty of His teaching, all who had sought to apprehend Him. But now, His “hour” was approaching,—that hour, of which He had so often spoken with deep and peculiar feelings, and the solemnities of which were to consummate the work of atonement. All the circumstances of outward ignominy which awaited Him in Jerusalem, together with the deep mental anguish which was to come upon Him as the Substitute of our guilty race, were vividly present to His mind. But He went forward with a calm and steadfast resolution. The world’s redemption lay upon Him; and the great design of His appearance on earth was to be accomplished by the agony of the garden, and the death of the cross. It is an impressive sight to behold Him thus calling His disciples away from the multitude, and unfolding to

* Mark x. 32—34, collated with Luke xviii. 31—33, and Matthew xx. 17—19.

them the scenes of His approaching sufferings; that when they should gaze upon Him treated as an outcast, and not exerting His power to save Himself,—when they should behold His countenance covered with mortal paleness, and hear Him utter the last groan of death,—they might remember that all this was necessary to fulfil the purposes of Infinite Wisdom, and accomplish the declarations of the prophetic Scriptures, and might look forward to the joyous triumph of the third day, when He who had submitted to be laid in the silent tomb, should burst its barriers, and come forth to bestow life upon the world.

But while it is instructive and affecting to contemplate the Redeemer thus addressing His apostles, it cannot but awaken a feeling of sadness, mixed with astonishment, to find that their minds were still closed to the true import of His words,* and that two of them were anxious, *even then*, to obtain from Him a promise of superiority to their brethren, when He should establish His glorious kingdom. James and John, who had been chosen, together with Peter, to enjoy the most intimate intercourse with Him during His ministry, and to witness the scene of the transfiguration, preferred through their mother the request that they “might sit, the one on His right hand, and the other on His left, in His kingdom.” The Saviour’s reply was impressive and rich in instruction. He first declared to them, that they knew not what they asked; that as yet their views of the nature of His kingdom were exceedingly defective; and that they entirely mistook the principles of His administration, if they supposed that its honours and rewards were to be

* Luke xviii. 34.

bestowed on the ground of personal favour. Then, to show them how unsuitable was such a request, prompted by unhallowed ambition, when He was approaching His deepest sorrows, and when the world's redemption already pressed heavily upon His spirit, He asked, "Are ye able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of, and to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?" A deep and weighty truth was implied in this inquiry,—that the way to reign with Him is to suffer with Him, and that all who hope to share His triumph, and participate His joy, must be prepared to endure for His sake the loss of worldly comforts, and even of life itself. James and John, not aware, perhaps, of the full import of their Lord's words, replied with confidence, "We are able:" and then the Redeemer admonished them, that they should indeed be called to suffer in His cause; but added, that the honours of His kingdom were not to be bestowed by Him on the ground of partiality, but rather to be awarded according to the high and holy principles fixed in the arrangements of the Eternal Father. "Ye shall indeed drink of My cup, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with: but to sit on My right hand, and on My left, is not Mine to give, but to them for whom it is prepared of My Father."* The plan which the Son of God appeared on earth to carry out, had been formed in the mind of the Triune Deity, and its great facts and principles were settled and determined. To this plan the Saviour invariably had respect; nor would He, for a moment, sanction the idea that the honours of His government could be bestowed on the ground of human attachment.

* Matthew xx. 20—23; Mark x. 35—40.

We can easily conceive, that the jealousy of the ten remaining apostles would be awakened by the request of James and John. The Saviour beheld the feelings of indignation which were rising in their breasts, and, calling them all around Him, said, with great tenderness and dignity, “Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them. But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; and whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant: even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many.”* Beautifully do these words illustrate the deep spirituality and condescending grace of the Redeemer’s character. They show us, that worldly ambition—the love of pre-eminence and power—is altogether alien to the temper which His people are to maintain; and that the only way to become “great” in His kingdom, is to abound in self-denying labours for the souls of men, and to engage in those labours with unaffected humility. They remind us, that He Himself is to be our pattern; and that as we follow Him to the cross, and gaze upon Him there pouring out His life “a ransom for many,” we are to renounce the pursuit of personal dignity or ease, and to imbibe that spirit of self-sacrificing love which bore Him through the scenes of His deepest sorrow.

The Redeemer had now reached the neighbourhood of Jericho, on His way to the metropolis of Judaea. When He passed through that city, He was attended by a great multitude, who had hung on His lips, and beheld

* Matthew xx. 24—28; Mark x. 41—45.

His miracles with deep interest. The multitude still increased; and as they left the city, two blind men, who sat by the road-side begging,—one of whom was well known as the son of Timaeus,—perceived from the noise, that there was an unusual concourse of people, and asked those who were near them, what it meant. They replied, that Jesus of Nazareth passed by. Instantly the blind men indulged a hope, that they might be able to engage the attention of that illustrious Prophet, and receive from Him, as so many had already done, the gift of sight. Addressing Him as the Son of David,—the long-expected Messiah,—they began importunately to entreat Him to have mercy upon them. The multitude, disturbed by their earnest and reiterated cries, charged them to hold their peace; but, aware that every thing depended on the success of their present application, they cried so much the more, “Thou Son of David, have mercy on us.” The Redeemer stood still, and commanded them to be brought near to Him. Instantly some of the multitude went to them, and, addressing Bartimæus, whose cries appear to have been even more vehement than those of his companion, said, “Be of good comfort, rise; He calleth thee.” The blind men now came to Him: and our Lord, with great dignity and kindness, touched their eyes, and instantly gave them sight; and they, having received this blessing, gladly joined the multitude that followed in His train, and triumphed in the power and goodness of their distinguished Benefactor.*

Another incident occurred soon after our Lord had left Jericho, which illustrated His discernment of human

* Matthew xx. 29—34; Mark x. 46—52; Luke xviii. 35—43.

character, and His intimate knowledge of the thoughts of every human mind, while it evinced, also, His condescending grace to those from whom the self-righteous Pharisees would have turned away with contempt. Zacchæus, the chief of the collectors of the customs in that district, felt an earnest desire to see Him; and as he could not do so among the crowd, he ran before, and climbed up into a sycamore-tree, by which the Saviour had to pass. When our Lord came to the place, He looked up, and said to him, "Zacchæus, make haste, and come down; for to-day I must abide at thy house." Astonished and delighted at this announcement, Zacchæus made haste, and came down, and entertained the Redeemer with every mark of affection and respect. Many of the people, who cherished an intense dislike to all who were engaged in the office of publican, and who knew that Zacchæus had been guilty of extortion and fraud, complained of this conduct of our Lord, saying, that He had gone to be guest with a man whose life had been sinful and unjust. But the grace of the Saviour had touched the heart of Zacchæus; and before all who were present, he avowed his intention to restore four-fold to every man, whatever he might have taken from him by false accusation, and to give to the poor one-half of his worldly property. The Redeemer accepted this evidence of his sincere repentance, and of his desire to be numbered among His people; and graciously declared, "This day is salvation come to this house, forasmuch as he also is a son of Abraham. For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost."*

The journey of our Lord was now nearly completed.

* Luke xix. 2—10.

He was drawing near to Bethany, in the immediate neighbourhood of Jerusalem; and within a very few days, He was about to enter the metropolis itself. Some of His attendants still cherished the hope, that “the kingdom of God would immediately appear,” and that the Prophet whose career had been one of light and blessing, would be enthroned among them in outward dignity and power.* But the Saviour addressed to them a parable, to correct these misapprehensions, and to admonish them of the position in which all who professed to be His disciples would soon be placed. By a beautiful allegory He taught them, that He was about to *leave* them;—that the seat of His dominion would be in *heaven*, and not on earth;—that the restraints of His government would call forth the *hostility* of many of the men of the world, and even of some who claimed to be the people of God;—that when He should ascend to His heavenly throne, He would entrust to each of them certain *talents*, which they were to use for His glory;—that their state on earth was not to be one of ease and worldly gratification, but one of *active* and *unremitting effort* in His cause;—and that when He should come again, in the manifestation of His royalty, He would not only inflict punishment upon His *avowed enemies*, but would summon His *servants* to their account, and distribute to every one of them according to his improvement or neglect.† Such were the sentiments which the Redeemer impressed on the minds of His followers, as He drew near to the capital of Judæa. He gave not the slightest countenance to the idea, that He was about to establish a secular kingdom, and to confer on His attendants dignity and wealth: but He sought

* Luke xix. 11.

† Luke xix. 12—27.

to prepare them for His own removal from their head, and He fixed their attention on their individual accountability, and the solemn investigation of their character and conduct which should take place at the period of His manifested glory.

CHAPTER XII.

THE REDEEMER'S ENTRANCE INTO JERUSALEM, AT THE APPROACH OF THE LAST PASSOVER. THE CONCLUSION OF HIS PUBLIC MINISTRY.

THE paschal solemnity was now rapidly approaching, and a large concourse of people had already gone up to Jerusalem, to prepare themselves to observe it. The Prophet of Galilee was a frequent topic of conversation in the metropolis; and the chief priests and Pharisees looked forward to the feast with mingled emotions of solicitude and hope. Sometimes they feared that, being aware of their malignant design against Him, He would remain at a distance; or that, should He come, He would, as on former occasions, frustrate their attempts to injure Him: and at other times they hoped, that He would appear among them, and that ere He left Jerusalem, they should be able to accomplish His death.*

The Redeemer, meanwhile, was drawing nearer and nearer to that guilty city, which was to be the scene of His deepest humiliation. It was His purpose to enter Jerusalem in public, and to deliver in the temple, in the

* John xi. 55—57.

presence of His bitterest enemies, some of His most impressive declarations and warnings. To those who envied His influence, and thirsted for His blood, He was about to proclaim the mysterious dignity of His person, and the supreme authority with which He should be invested; and then He was about to yield Himself into the hands of the betrayer, and to submit even to the death of the cross, to accomplish the designs of infinite holiness and love. Six days before the passover He arrived at the village of Bethany, which was endeared to Him as the residence of Lazarus and his pious sisters, and which was now memorable as the scene of the most stupendous miracle which He had wrought.* In this favoured spot He appears to have passed an entire day before entering the capital of Judæa. The Sabbath had terminated; and the first day of the week in which He was to suffer, was spent by Him in the society of His faithful disciples and friends. A person of considerable note in Bethany, of the name of Simon, prepared a supper in honour of His arrival; and the Redeemer condescended to accept the invitation given to Him. Lazarus, also, and his sisters, were present on the occasion; but while Lazarus sat with our Lord as one of the guests, Martha expressed her affection and reverence for her Benefactor, by cheerfully waiting upon Him at table.† The love and veneration of Mary were evinced in a different form. She took an alabaster box of ointment of spikenard, very precious, and, breaking the seal, poured it on the Redeemer's head and feet.‡ She felt,

* John xii. 1, collated with John xi. 5.

† John xii. 2, collated with Matthew xxvi. 6; Mark xiv. 3.

‡ John xii. 3; Matthew xxvi. 7; Mark xiv. 3.

as she did this, that nothing was too costly to be expended upon Him, from whose teaching she had derived so great spiritual benefit, and whose more than human glory had been displayed in calling her brother from the tomb; and a mournful impression seems to have rested on her mind, that His sacred body, which she thus honoured, would soon be treated with rude indignity, and be committed to the silent tomb. Judas Iscariot, and a few others, complained of the lavish use of so valuable an unguent; and asked, "To what purpose is this waste? for this ointment might have been sold for more than three hundred pence, and given to the poor." But the Redeemer at once interposed, to assure the affectionate and anxious Mary, that He approved of this expression of her esteem and love. He reminded them, that they had the poor always with them, and that repeated opportunities would be given to them to show the sincerity of their benevolent feelings towards the destitute: but He added, with peculiar emphasis, "Me ye have not always;" and then spoke of this action of Mary as peculiarly appropriate when viewed in relation to His approaching death. It was an expression of love to Him, as one who was soon to be removed from their sight; and the Saviour has commended it to the attention of His people, in every age, as a beautiful illustration of that supreme regard to Himself by which they should be distinguished. "She hath done what she could: she is come beforehand to anoint My body to the burying. Verily I say unto you, Wheresoever this Gospel shall be preached throughout the whole world, this also that she hath done shall be spoken of for a memorial of her."*

* John xii. 4—8; Mark xiv. 4—9; Matthew xxvi. 8—13.

With His mind thus fixed on the sufferings and death that awaited Him, the Redeemer prepared, on the following morning, to make His public entrance into Jerusalem. He sent two of His disciples to a village just at hand, to bring to Him a young ass, on which no man had yet sat. The owners of the colt being apprised that Jesus, the great Teacher of Israel, desired it for His use, at once consented to the disciples taking it; and they brought it to Him, accompanied by its dam.* In selecting an ass, as the animal on which He would ride into the city, the Redeemer designed to fulfil the remarkable prediction of Zechariah, and to present an impressive and beautiful emblem of the lowliness of His own spirit, and the pacific character of His reign. He came to the hill of Zion, not on the warlike horse, or in a military chariot, but like a peaceful Sovereign of ancient days; and everything around Him proclaimed, that the kingdom which He would establish was not to be founded or extended by the clash of arms. This had been indicated, with great clearness and power, in the prophecy which was now accomplished:—"Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee: He is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass. And I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim, and the horse from Jerusalem, and the battle-bow shall be cut off: and He shall speak peace unto the heathen: and His dominion shall be from sea even to sea, and from the river even to the ends of the earth."† A great multitude attended our Lord as

* Matthew xxi. 1—7; Mark xi. 1—7; Luke xix. 29—35; John xii. 14.

† Zechariah ix. 9, 10: see also Matthew xxi. 4, 5; John xii. 15, 16.

He went forward to Jerusalem.* Many had accompanied Him from Galilee; and others came from Jerusalem to Bethany, when they heard that He had arrived there, that they might see both Himself and Lazarus whom He had raised from the dead.† As the procession moved onward,—the Redeemer riding upon the ass-colt, on which some of His disciples had spread their garments,—the multitude began to express their joy and triumph. Many threw their mantles on the road, that He might ride as upon one continued carpet; others cut down branches from the trees, and strewed them in the way; and from the lips of nearly all who were present, the joyous acclamation burst forth, “Hosanna to the Son of David: blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord: Hosanna in the highest.”‡ The news quickly reached Jerusalem, that the great Prophet was about to enter it publicly; and many persons who had already come up to the feast, and who probably had often heard Him, and seen His miracles, in the northern district of the Holy Land, came forth to meet Him with branches of palm-trees, and joined in the universal shout of praise and triumph.§ Some of the Pharisees, who mingled with the multitude, appealed to Him to repress these acclamations; but He replied, “I tell you that if these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out.”||

As the Saviour drew near to Jerusalem, He gave an affecting proof of the sorrow which filled His own breast, amidst all the joys and hopes of His followers. The

* Matthew xxi. 8.

† John xii. 9.

‡ Matthew xxi. 8, 9; Mark xi. 7—10; Luke xix. 35—38.

§ John xii. 12, 13.

|| Luke xix. 39, 40.

view of that guilty city, which was just about to fill up the measure of its iniquities, and on which the heaviest visitations of Divine wrath were about to fall, moved Him even to tears: and He paused, and wept over it, and exclaimed, “If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes. For the days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side, and shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another; because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation.”* Then, resuming His progress, He entered Jerusaleim, and the whole city was moved at the strange and novel sight. Many of the inhabitants doubtless recognised Him; but many others, and several of those who had come up from the country to worship at the feast, eagerly inquired, “Who is this?” His attendants replied, “This is Jesus, the Prophet of Nazareth of Galilee.”† He, meanwhile, went forward to the temple, and cast out, as He had done at the commencement of His ministry, those who converted that sacred place into a house of merchandise.‡ There, also, He repeated the exercises of His power and love. “The blind and the lame came to Him in the temple; and He healed them.”§ The little children, too, crowded around Him, re-echoing the shout of the multitude, “Hosanna to the Son of David!” and when the chief priests and scribes indig-

* Luke xix. 41—44.

† Matthew xxi. 10, 11.

‡ Matthew xxi. 12—13; Luke xix. 45—48.

§ Matthew xxi. 14.

nantly said to Him, “Hearest thou what these say?” He avowed His approval of their acclamation, as an appropriate acknowledgment of His real character, and of the blessings of His reign:—“Yea; have ye never read, Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings Thou hast perfected praise?”*

It appears scarcely necessary to remark, that there was nothing in our Lord’s public entrance into Jerusalem, which could justly awaken the jealousy of the civil power. He made no attempt to establish a secular dominion, but came to the hill of Zion as a spiritual King;—the exercises of authority which He put forth were designed to vindicate the sacred character of that place where solemn worship was to be offered to Jehovah, by men of every land;—and the triumphal scene closed with the renewed exertion of His power to remove the sufferings of men, and restore health and vigour to the disabled frame.

It was, probably, on this day, as our Lord was passing out of the temple, that certain devout Greeks, who had come up to be present at the feast, and who were personally known to the apostle Philip, sought, through him, to be introduced to the illustrious Teacher of whom they had heard, and whose entrance into Jerusalem had caused so great a sensation.† The Saviour acceded to their wish to see and hear Him; and in their presence, and that of His disciples, with many others, He gave utterance to the remarkable words: “The hour is come, that the Son of man should be glorified. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it

* Matthew xxi. 15, 16.

† John xii. 20—22.

bringeth forth much fruit. He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world, shall keep it unto life eternal. If any man serve Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there shall also My servant be: if any man serve Me, him will My Father honour."* This language of the Redeemer is rich in spiritual instruction. It shows us, that His own mind was intent on His approaching sufferings and death, as necessary to His mediatorial glory, and essential to the salvation of man. It illustrates the loftiness of His claims. He demanded, as His inalienable right, the submission and obedience of every human being; He called upon His people to tread in His steps of self-denying labour and suffering, and to follow Him even unto death; and He promised to all who should yield themselves up to His service, that the Eternal Father would confer upon them the highest honours and rewards. Having uttered these impressive sayings, the Redeemer appears to have paused; and then, feeling already the pressure of that inward anguish, which in its fulness was soon about to come upon Him, He said, "Now is My soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save Me from this hour: but for this cause came I unto this hour. Father, glorify Thy name."† Profound and momentous are the truths which these words of the Saviour involve. The Lord Jesus lays open to us the deep workings of His own mind. The "hour" upon which He was entering, was one of almost overwhelming sorrow; but He could not ask to be saved from it, since it was for the very purpose of becoming our Substitute, and bearing on His spirit the pressure of our guilt, that He appeared on earth, and

* John xii. 23—26.

† John xii. 27.

had gone through the years of His public ministry. The only request which He, the Mediator, could offer, was, that in all the scenes of darkness and suffering through which He was about to pass, the Father's name might be glorified, and the perfections of the Divine character shine forth with unclouded lustre. Immediately upon His uttering the petition, "Father, glorify Thy name," a voice was heard from heaven, "I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again." Some who stood by said that it thundered; others said that an angel spake to Him: but the Saviour declared to them, that this voice was intended to confirm their faith in Him, in that season of gloom which was at hand; and then affirmed the important bearing of His sufferings and death on the overthrow of Satan's empire, and the salvation of a guilty world. "This voice came not because of Me, but for your sakes. Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me."* Many who stood around Him, and who had shared in the joyous emotions called forth by His public entrance into Jerusalem, were by no means prepared to receive the announcement of His approaching death; and they answered Him, "We have heard out of the law, that the Messiah abideth for ever: and how sayest thou, The Son of man must be lifted up? who is this Son of man?" The Saviour, in reply, admonished them not to cavil at His words, but gratefully to follow the light which, during the brief remainder of His public ministry, should be shed forth upon their minds. "Yet a little while is the light with you. Walk while ye

* John xii. 28—32.

have the light, lest darkness come upon you: for he that walketh in darkness knoweth not whither he goeth. While ye have light, believe in the light, that ye may be the children of light.”* He then left them, and, retiring from Jerusalem with the twelve, went to Bethany, and lodged there.†

On the following morning, as He returned about sunrise to the city, He saw a fig-tree richly covered with leaves, and, being hungry, went up to it, and found it hopelessly barren. He then pronounced on it the curse, “Let no man eat fruit of thee hereafter for ever;” and almost immediately it withered away.‡ This tree stood as an emblem of the insincere professors of religion, that abounded in the Jewish church, and especially in the guilty metropolis; and the malediction which He uttered against it, illustrated the fearful ruin which was coming upon them. Having entered the city, He again went up to the temple, and repeated the exercise of His authority, in driving out those who had again dared to occupy its sacred courts for the purpose of traffic.§ On this day, also, He taught publicly in the temple,|| though we have no record of the discourses which He delivered,—unless, indeed, we assign to this day the brief but impressive observations which are given by St. John, towards the close of the twelfth chapter of his Gospel. “He that believeth on Me, believeth not on Me, but on Him that sent Me. And he that seeth Me, seeth Him that sent Me. I am come a Light into the

* John xii. 34—36.

† John xii. 36; Matthew xxi. 17; Mark xi. 11.

‡ Matthew xxi. 18, 19; Mark xi. 12—14.

§ Mark xi. 15—17. || Mark xi. 18; Luke xix. 47.

world, that whosoever believeth on Me, should not abide in darkness. And if any man hear My words and believe not, I judge him not: for I came not to judge the world, but to save the world. He that rejecteth Me, and receiveth not My words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day. For I have not spoken of Myself; but the Father which sent Me, He gave Me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak. And I know that His commandment is life everlasting: whatsoever I speak therefore, even as the Father said unto Me, so I speak.”* In these words, the Redeemer affirmed the perfect accordance of all that He taught and did, as the Mediator, with the purposes of the Eternal Father;—He declared, as on the preceding day, that He had come to earth to shed light upon the spirit of man, and to disclose to every dark and fainting mind the way of salvation and peace; and He pointed out the fearful consequences of rejecting Him, when the history of this world should be brought to a close. A secret conviction of His Messiahship, and of the truth of all His sayings, now filled the minds of several even of the rulers, though they did not openly confess Him: but the chief priests and scribes generally were only irritated by every fresh development of His wisdom, and every exercise of His power.† In the evening of this day, also, the Saviour retired from the city to the Mount of Olives.‡

Early on the next morning, He again went to Jeru-

* John xii. 44—50.

† John xii. 42, 43; Mark xi. 18; Luke xix. 47, 48.

‡ Mark xi. 19; Luke xxi. 37.

salem, accompanied by the twelve; and as they passed by the fig-tree, which was now “dried up from the roots,” Peter and the other disciples adverted, with a degree of surprise, to the complete and almost instantaneous fulfilment of the curse which He had pronounced upon it. The Saviour availed Himself of this opportunity to encourage them to exercise a firm faith in the Divine fidelity and power, and to expect the actual performance of every engagement of the Most High.* He then went forward with them to the city, and proceeded to the temple, to instruct the people who were assembled there to listen to His teaching.† This was the fourth day—Wednesday—of the week in which He was to suffer; and on this day *He closed His public ministry.* It is a circumstance of peculiar interest, that three of the evangelists have left us a copious account of His discourses and conversations on this memorable day; and we have now to listen to them with that solemnity and earnestness with which the last public addresses of our Saviour and our Lord should ever be regarded.

As He was teaching the people in the temple, the chief priests, and scribes, and elders came up to Him, and, adverting to the occurrences of the two preceding days, inquired, “By what authority doest thou these things? and who gave thee this authority?”‡ The Redeemer, who well knew that this question did not proceed from a desire candidly to investigate the evidences of His claims, declined to reply to it, in the first instance, in a direct and explicit manner. He chose

* Mark xi. 20—26; Matthew xxi. 20—22.

† Mark xi. 27, collated with Luke xxi. 37, 38.

‡ Matthew xxi. 23; Mark xi. 27, 28; Luke xx. 1, 2.

rather to put their sincerity to the test, by asking them a question relative to the mission of John the Baptist,—whether it was from heaven, or of men? and when they declined to answer it,—since to acknowledge the Divine mission of John would have been to allow the claims of the Lord Jesus, and to deny it would have exposed them to the indignation of the people,—the Saviour rejoined, “Neither tell I you by what authority I do these things.”* But He did not thus terminate the conversation. In the presence of the assembled multitude, He addressed to the chief priests and elders two parables, calculated to awaken, even in *their* callous hearts, serious emotions. In the former of these, the application of which He Himself pointed out, He showed them that, notwithstanding their professions of regard and submission to Jehovah, their case was far more perilous than that even of publicans and harlots,—since they had resisted every call to repentance, and had closed their eyes against the clearest light of truth.† But it was the second of these parables which was the more remarkable, especially when viewed in connexion with the circumstances in which our Lord now stood. “Hear,” He said, “another parable. There was a certain householder which planted a vineyard, and hedged it round about, and digged a winepress in it, and built a tower, and let it out to husbandmen, and went into a far country: and when the time of the fruit drew near, he sent his servants to the husbandmen, that they might receive the fruits of it. And the husbandmen took his servants, and beat one, and killed another, and stoned

* Matthew xxi. 24—27; Mark xi. 29—33; Luke xx. 3—8.

† Matthew xxi. 28—32.

another. Again, he sent other servants more than the first: and they did unto them likewise. But last of all he sent unto them his son, saying, They will reverence my son. But when the husbandmen saw the son, they said among themselves, This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and let us seize on his inheritance. And they caught him, and cast him out of the vineyard, and slew him.”* Here let us pause, for a moment, and reflect on the bold and impressive manner in which the Redeemer affirmed His personal dignity, even while addressing His bitterest enemies. The prophets who had come before Him were the *servants* of the Lord of the vineyard: He was THE SON, entitled to peculiar reverence, and the rejection of whom would be an act of surpassing guilt. Let us reflect, too, how distinctly He intimated to the chief priests and scribes His knowledge of the design which they had formed against His life, and of the success which would now attend it, though soon their triumph would be followed by utter dismay and ruin. Often, in the course of His ministry, He had restrained their violence; but now He was about to yield Himself up into their hands, and to become the victim of their malignity. The parable which He delivered, represented even the Son as slain by those to whose care the vineyard had been entrusted; and having led His hearers to this point, the Saviour appealed to them, “When the lord therefore of the vineyard cometh, what will he do unto those husbandmen?” They answered, “He will miserably destroy those wicked men, and will let out his vineyard unto other husbandmen, which shall render

* Matthew xxi. 33—39; Mark xii. 1—8; Luke xx. 9—15.

him the fruits in their seasons.”* The Redeemer took up this reply, and added, emphatically, “He *shall* come and destroy these husbandmen, and shall give the vineyard to others.” The solemnity of His manner made it obvious, that He intended to predict the heaviest judgments as about to fall upon *them*; and they exclaimed, “God forbid!” But the Saviour beheld them steadfastly, and said, “What is this then that is written? ‘The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner: this is the Lord’s doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes.’ Whosoever shall fall upon that stone shall be broken; but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder.”† Here, again, our Lord adverted to His approaching rejection and death; but He connected these events with His mediatorial exaltation, to be brought about by an astonishing and overwhelming display of Divine power. He was the “stone” set at nought by “the builders,”—by those who professed to instruct the people of God, and to establish them in knowledge and holiness: but soon He was to become “the head of the corner,”—His lowest humiliation was to be followed by the highest dignity, and He was to be declared the Head and Lord of the church of God, uniting all the truly pious, and forming the model of that loveliness which shall at last adorn their perfected nature. To trifle with His claims, even while He appeared in outward lowliness, was an act of fearful guilt; but to maintain a perverse resistance to Him, when He should have ascended to the throne of His

* Matthew xxi. 40, 41.

† Luke xx. 16—18, collated with Matthew xxi. 42—45, and Mark xii. 9—11.

glory, must involve men in utter and irretrievable ruin. As the chief priests and scribes listened to these sayings of our Lord, they were yet more incensed against Him, and “sought” even then “to lay hands on Him:” but they feared the people, and, deeming it most prudent to defer their attempt against His life, they left Him, for the present, and departed.*

To the people who continued around Him, the Saviour now addressed a parable, in which He represented the blessings of the evangelical economy, under the figure of a marriage-feast given by a king in honour of his son; and illustrated the fearful consequences both of making light of the Gospel-invitation, and of professing to accept it, and yet neglecting the required preparation for the Divine presence.† Some of the Pharisees and Herodians now came to Him, and sought to ensnare Him, by proposing a question to which they deemed it impossible for Him to reply, without either rendering Himself unpopular, or laying Himself open to a charge before the Roman governor. With many commendations of His fearlessness in declaring the truth, they asked Him, “Is it lawful to give tribute to Cæsar, or not? Shall we give, or shall we not give?” The Redeemer, knowing their hypocrisy and cunning, said to them, “Why tempt ye Me? bring Me a penny, that I may see it.” When they produced one, He inquired, “Whose is this image and superscription?” They replied, “Cæsar’s:” and then He uttered the beautiful and impressive maxim, “Render therefore unto Cæsar the things which are Cæsar’s; and unto God the things that are God’s.” They listened

* Matthew xxi. 46; Mark xii. 12; Luke xx. 19.

† Matthew xxii. 1—14.

with astonishment to this reply, so full of profound and heavenly wisdom; and, not perceiving how they could take hold of His words, they "left Him, and went their way."*

Some time after this, the Sadducees came to Him, and, as the avowed opponents of the doctrine of a future life, placed before Him a case, which they considered sufficient to show the folly of hoping for an existence beyond the grave, and still more the folly of anticipating the resurrection of the body. They stated that, in compliance with the direction of Moses, "If a man die, having no children, his brother shall marry his wife, and raise up seed unto his brother," one woman had been in succession the wife of seven brethren; and then they asked Him, with an air of triumph, "In the resurrection therefore, when they shall rise, whose wife shall she be of them? for the seven had her to wife?" The Saviour answered them, "Ye do err, not knowing the Scriptures, nor the power of God. The children of this world marry, and are given in marriage; but they which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry, nor are given in marriage: neither can they die any more: for they are equal unto the angels; and are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection. Now that the dead are raised, even Moses showed at the bush, when he calleth the Lord the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. For He is not a God of the dead, but of the living: for all live unto Him."† In this reply our Lord shed a clear and instructive light on one feature of the

* Matthew xxii. 15—22; Mark xii. 13—17; Luke xx. 20—26.

† Matthew xxii. 23—32; Mark xii. 18—27; Luke xx. 27—38.

heavenly state. The peculiar relations of earth, and the instincts connected with them, have no existence there: all is spiritual, and adapted to the special dwelling-place of God. He showed, also, the depth of meaning contained in the covenant-promise, that the Most High will be "a God" to His faithful servants. Were this the only state of existence, a dark and impenetrable cloud would sometimes rest upon this engagement, when compared with His actual dispensations towards His people: but the glory of that state in which the souls of departed saints live with Him, and still more, the higher glory which shall encircle their entire and perfected nature, when the day of the resurrection shall arrive, will dissipate every cloud, and show that the blessings which He bestows on His people are worthy even of Him, the Creator and Lord of the universe.

The Pharisees, being apprised that Jesus had put the Sadducees to silence, again came to Him in considerable numbers.* One of the scribes who belonged to this sect, having listened attentively, and with admiration, to His reasoning on the future state, asked Him, "Master, which is the great commandment in the law?" This was a question on which considerable diversity of opinion existed among the Jewish teachers; and many of them were disposed to fix upon some ceremonial precept, as that to which the greatest importance should be assigned. But the Redeemer, without hesitation, declared that supreme love to God is the first duty of the human spirit, and gave a summary of the law for the instruction of His people in every age. "Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart,

* Matthew xxii. 34, compared with verse 41.

and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets." The scribe expressed his entire approval of our Lord's reply; and the Saviour, perceiving that his mind was opening to the light of truth, and to the entrance of gracious feeling, said unto him, "Thou art not far from the kingdom of God."*

The profound wisdom of our Lord, as a religious Teacher, had now been evinced; and no one ventured to ask him any further question.† But He now proposed to the assembled Pharisees an inquiry, which bore directly on the person and character of the Messiah. He said to them, "What think ye of the Messiah? whose son is He?" They immediately replied, "The son of David." But He had in view a deeper truth than this. He wished to fix the attention of every thoughtful mind on the inherent personal dignity which had been ascribed to the Messiah in the prophetic Scriptures, as well as on the mediatorial exaltation and dominion which had been attributed to Him. He referred them to the one hundred and tenth Psalm, and asked, "How then doth David, by the Holy Spirit, call Him Lord, saying, 'The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit Thou on My right hand, till I make Thine enemies Thy footstool?' If David then call Him Lord, how is He his son?" A clear and affecting light was thus shed by the Redeemer Himself on the application of this inspired hymn, and its deep, spiritual import. He has taught us to regard it as con-

* Matthew xxii. 35—40; Mark xii. 28—34.

† Matthew xxii. 46; Mark xii. 34; Luke xx. 39, 40.

veying an intimation of His higher and eternal nature,—that although, according to the flesh, He was a descendant of the royal house of David, He was yet possessed of a nature before which David himself bowed with lowly reverence and profound submission.*

All this occurred while the Saviour was in the temple;† and now, as He sat over against the treasury, a circumstance attracted His attention, which led Him to place the subject of *religious offerings* in its true light. He beheld many persons advancing to the treasury, and there depositing their gifts. Several rich men cast in much; but a poor widow came at length, and threw in two mites. The Redeemer looked upon her with interest, and, calling unto Him His disciples, said, “Of a truth I say unto you, that this poor widow hath cast in more than they all: for all these have of their abundance cast in unto the offerings of God; but she of her penury hath cast in all the living that she had.”‡ Thus did He affirm the principle, that our religious gifts are to be estimated by the *proportion* which they bear to our resources, and by the disposition which they may evince to make a sacrifice of worldly comfort, rather than stand aloof from the cause of God.

The Redeemer was now about finally to leave the temple; but, before He did so, He gave a last warning to the people who were assembled around Him, to beware of imbibing the spirit, and imitating the conduct, of the Scribes and Pharisees. And then, in the most solemn manner, He denounced woe against these false professors

* Matthew xxii. 41—45; Mark xii. 35—37; Luke xx. 41—44.

† Mark xii. 35.

‡ Mark xii. 41—44; Luke xxi. 1—4.

of religion, pointing out their great and grievous sins. He set forth the awful ruin which was about to come upon the city, and upon that beautiful house in which they were assembled; and then He added, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate. For I say unto you, Ye shall not see Me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord." *

These were the last words which the Saviour uttered in the temple, where He had so often declared the message of salvation, and met the cavils of His malignant enemies. As He departed from that house, now bereft of its highest glory,—the presence and teaching of the incarnate Son of God,—some of His disciples asked Him to contemplate its architectural beauty. He replied, with mournful solemnity, "See ye not all these things? Verily I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down." †

Our Lord now left the city, and retired to the Mount of Olives; and as He sat there, four of His apostles asked Him privately for more ample information relative to the awful calamities which He had just predicted,—the overthrow of Jerusalem, with the entire destruction of the temple,—and relative to the end of the world. He entered upon the former of these subjects at considerable length; and then added a brief statement concern-

* Matthew xxiii. 1—39; Mark xii. 38—40; Luke xx. 45—47.

† Matthew xxiv. 1, 2; Mark xiii. 1, 2; Luke xxi. 5, 6.

ing the winding up of this world's history, and a solemn charge to all His people, and especially to those who are called to sustain office in His church, to be faithful to their trust, and to maintain a constant preparation for His manifestation in glory.* He was anxious that His apostles should contemplate this great event, not as a matter of curious speculation, but rather as suggesting important practical lessons. He wished them ever to remember their true position upon earth;—that, as His devoted followers, they were to await with earnest expectation and desire His second coming; and as His servants, entrusted by Him with certain gifts and advantages to be improved for His glory, they were to live with an habitual reference to their final account. He addressed to them two parables—that of the ten virgins, and that of the talents—bearing on these subjects, and calculated to enforce on all His people the duty of continual watchfulness and effort.† And then He spread before their view the scenes of the final judgment. He declared His own coming in all the majesty of the universal Sovereign;—the attendance of the holy angels upon Him;—the gathering of all nations before His tribunal;—and the separation of mankind, by His own unerring discernment and resistless power, into two great classes, according to the character which they had sustained on earth. He declared that, when He should thus be revealed in undisputed royalty, He would welcome His faithful people to share in the joys and triumphs of His kingdom, and pronounce against the wicked and impenitent the sentence of everlasting woe.

* Matthew xxiv. 3—51; Mark xiii. 3—37; Luke xxi. 7—36.

† Matthew xxv. 1—30.

He unfolded the principles on which the final judgment will be conducted; giving prominence to the disposition of sincere, devoted, active love to Himself, as the grand characteristic of those whom He would approve. This love, He taught them, would manifest itself in the cheerful acknowledgment of His people, though involved in poverty, reproach, and persecution,—as well as in the imitation of His own benevolence; and He assured them that every development of it would be graciously acknowledged by Him, when He should appear to receive the homage of assembled worlds. From the throne of His glory, He will say to those who have identified themselves with His afflicted and persecuted people, and have sought to relieve their wants, “Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto Me.” But the absence of this active, devoted love to Himself will form, in the case of multitudes, the ground of eternal condemnation. This truth, also, the Saviour placed in a clear and striking light; and then He added the impressive and awful words, “These shall go away into everlasting punishment; but the righteous into everlasting life.”* Thus, as the Redeemer closed His ministry, He declared with peculiar solemnity the grandeur of *His personal claims*. He was about to pass through the darkest scenes of His great mediatorial undertaking; His immaculate spirit was soon to be weighed down with unutterable anguish; and He was to be lifted up on the cross, as a blasphemer and an outcast; but even now He taught His disciples, that He should at last occupy the

throne of judgment, and that, when He should come to fix the eternal destinies of men, one great test of character would be, the possession and development of supreme love to Himself, or the refusal to own His people and to suffer in His cause.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE INTERCOURSE OF THE REDEEMER WITH HIS APOSTLES ON THE EVENING WHICH PRECEDED HIS DEATH.

THE *public* ministry of our Lord had now terminated; and within two days—as He Himself declared to His apostles*—He was to be betrayed into the hands of His enemies, and lifted up on the cross. On the evening of the day in which He delivered His last addresses in the temple, the Sanhedrim assembled to deliberate on the means which they should take to accomplish His death. They were anxious to avoid all unnecessary publicity, and, if possible, to apprehend Him when away from the multitude. They even proposed to allow the feast to transpire, lest their attempts against His life should cause an uproar among the people.† But while they were engaged in consultation, Judas Iscariot, one of the twelve, came unto them, and offered, if they would remunerate him, to betray his Master into their hands. The love of money had, for some time, alienated his heart from the Redeemer; and, impelled by the great

* Matthew xxvi. 1, 2.

† Matthew xxvi. 3—5; Mark xiv. 1, 2; Luke xxii. 1, 2.

adversary, he was now ready to sell his Lord, even for thirty pieces of silver. The Sanhedrim eagerly caught at his proposal; and, having entered into a formal engagement with them, he left them to watch for the first favourable opportunity of effecting his design.*

On the following day, the Redeemer sent Peter and John into the city, to prepare for the celebration of the passover. He gave them particular instructions as to the individual to whom they should apply for the use of a guest-chamber. On their arrival at the city, they were to meet a man bearing a pitcher of water; him they were to follow into the house into which he should enter, and to express to the head of the family the wish of Jesus to keep the passover at his house with His disciples. They obeyed these directions; and being welcomed by the master of the house, and conducted by him to a large upper room conveniently furnished, they made every preparation for the paschal supper.†

In the evening, the Redeemer came with the twelve.‡ As He sat down with them at the table, He expressed the deep and peculiar emotions with which He had looked forward to that evening. "With desire," He said, "I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer: for I say unto you, I will not any more eat thereof, until it be fulfilled in the kingdom of God."§ It was, indeed, a memorable occasion. It was the eve of the offering up of His own effectual sacrifice, of which the paschal lamb had for ages been a type;

* Matthew xxvi. 14—16; Mark xiv. 10, 11; Luke xxii. 8—6.

† Matthew xxvi. 17—19; Mark xiv. 12—16; Luke xxii. 7—13.

‡ Matthew xxvi. 20; Mark xiv. 17; Luke xxii. 14.

§ Luke xxii. 15, 16.

and it was the last season of affectionate intercourse with them which He should have, before submitting to the deepest sorrows of His mediatorial undertaking. Soon they would be scattered, as sheep without a shepherd; and although the gloom which His ignominious death should bring over their minds, would be dissipated by His resurrection on the third day, yet was He, after a short interval, to be removed from their sight, and ascend to the throne of His glory. With the exception of one, they had clung to Him with sincere attachment, and under His protection had felt themselves secure; but now they were about to be placed in new circumstances, and, as the witnesses of His death and resurrection, to go forth to publish His claims to mankind, and to endure for His sake reproach, and want, and persecution.

The cup with which it was usual to begin the paschal supper, was first handed to them by our Lord, though He would not Himself drink of it.* Nothing which seemed to indicate rejoicing was appropriate to the solemn feelings which now filled His mind, or to the season of anguish upon which He was about to enter. But His apostles were so unmindful of the peculiar duties of the occasion, and so defective in spirituality of mind, that even as they sat with our Lord, at the last supper, they renewed the controversy, which of them should be accounted the greatest.† The Saviour adopted a most affecting method of reproofing their guilty ambition, and showing them what was the temper which His disciples should cultivate. He rose from supper, and, laying aside His upper garment, took a towel and girded Himself; then, having poured water into a basin,

* Luke xxii. 17, 18.

† Luke xxii. 24.

He began to wash His disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel with which He was girded. A feeling of astonishment must have pervaded their minds as they beheld Him, who had so often declared His unearthly glory, performing this menial office. Peter was unable to repress his emotions; and when the Saviour came to him, he said, "Lord, dost Thou wash my feet?" Jesus replied, "What I do, thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter." The eager affection of Peter, however, led him still to hesitate; and he even ventured to say to our Lord, "Thou shalt never wash my feet." The Redeemer's answer was emphatic and alarming: "If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with Me." While it reminded Peter, that profound submission to His arrangements, whether they accorded with his own views or not, was an imperative duty; it taught him, that there were inward evils from which he needed to be cleansed, in order to an eternal union with the Master whom he loved. Peter exclaimed, "Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head." And then the Redeemer acknowledged, with great kindness, the sincerity of his attachment, and that of His apostles generally, together with their desire to attain and exemplify the holiness of His people; but He admonished them, that they did not as yet exhibit all the humility and purity which He designed them to possess. "He that is washed, needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit: and ye are clean, but not all."* When He had gone round to all His apostles, and had washed their feet, He resumed His upper garment, and again took His place at their head; and, addressing them with great tenderness

and dignity, said, "Know ye what I have done to you? Ye call Me Master and Lord: and ye say rightly; for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you. Verily, verily, I say unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord; neither he that is sent, greater than he that sent him. If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them."* After a pause, as it appears, He added, "The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and they that exercise authority upon them are called benefactors. But ye shall not be so: but he that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that doth serve. For whether is greater, he that sitteth at meat, or he that serveth? But I am among you as he that serveth."†

This address of our Lord to His apostles was, in every point of view, instructive and affecting. It placed the temper which became His followers in striking contrast with that love of pre-eminence which they had often indulged; it taught them to contemplate Him as their pattern, and ever to imbibe His spirit, and walk in His steps; and it gave prominence to His own rightful claims, as the Sovereign of His people, though for their sakes He had submitted to a low and menial service.

As the supper proceeded, the Redeemer was "troubled in spirit," while He thought of the treachery of one of those who were even now eating with Him as His companions and friends. With great solemnity He said to the twelve, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, that one of

* John xiii. 12—17.

† Luke xxii. 25—27.

you shall betray Me."* A feeling of surprise and grief spread itself around; and the apostles, one by one, began to ask Him, "Lord, is it I?" Peter beckoned to John, who was reclining next to our Lord, that he should ask Him distinctly to point out the traitor. He did so, and the Saviour replied, "He it is to whom I shall give a sop, when I have dipped it." Then, dipping a sop, He gave it to Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon, and almost immediately afterwards added, "That thou doest, do quickly." Judas, after having inquired like the rest, "Master, is it I?" and having received from our Lord a direct answer in the affirmative, retired from the company with conflicting passions, but resolved to embrace the first opportunity of carrying his treacherous purpose into effect.†

The Redeemer was now left with the eleven who continued faithfully attached to Him. To them He said, "Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in Him. If God be glorified in Him, God shall also glorify Him in Himself, and shall straightway glorify Him."‡ In these words, He taught them that His state of humiliation was just about to terminate. He was approaching, indeed, its deepest shadows, and His pure and benignant spirit was soon to experience an intense and unutterable anguish; but this very sorrow and shame were to be the ground of His mediatorial exaltation; and after glorifying the Father by His obedience unto death, He was to rise to universal dominion, and receive the homage of every created mind. That

* John xiii. 21; Matthew xxvi. 21; Mark xiv. 18.

† John xiii. 22—30; Matthew xxvi. 22—25; Mark xiv. 19—21; Luke xxii. 23.

‡ John xiii. 31, 32.

glory, however, which awaited Him as the result of His propitiatory sufferings, implied His ascension to heaven; and thus He went on to say to His apostles, that soon He should be removed from their sight, and that, after a brief interval, they would not be privileged to converse with Him, as they now did, on earth. “ Little children, yet a little while I am with you. Ye shall seek Me: and as I said unto the Jews, Whither I go, ye cannot come; so now I say to you.”* And then He added the earnest and solemn charge, “ A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are My disciples, if ye have love one to another.”† Hitherto, the Redeemer’s presence with them had been their chief bond of union; and their recent controversy had made it obvious how ready they were to indulge an unhallowed rivalry. When He, therefore, should be removed from their head, they were in danger of being separated from each other, or, at least, of regarding each other with shy distrust. But He charged them to remain united, and to love each other with a deep, spiritual, self-sacrificing affection, such as that which He had ever borne to them. He made the development of mutual love—a love of spiritual sympathy, and fraternal attachment—the distinguishing mark of His followers in every age.

Peter, unwilling to think that he *must* be separated from his Lord, said with characteristic eagerness, “ Lord, whither goest Thou?” Jesus answered him, “ Whither I go, thou canst not follow Me now; but thou shalt follow Me afterwards.” Peter rejoined, “ Lord, why cannot

* John xiii. 33.

† John xiii. 34, 35.

I follow Thee now? I will lay down my life for Thy sake." Sincere and warm was the affection which prompted this declaration: but Peter knew not, as yet, the feebleness of human resolutions, and the need of a constant supply of Divine strength. Ere the light of day should again break upon the earth, he who was now so forward to express his love, would thrice deny his Master. The Saviour knew this, and admonished him of his approaching fall. "Jesus answered him, Wilt thou lay down thy life for My sake? Verily, verily, I say unto thee, The cock shall not crow, till thou hast denied Me thrice."*

In connexion with the supper of that evening, our Lord instituted the sacrament which was to *commemorate* in every age *His sacrificial death*, and in which His people were gratefully to avow their *faith in His atonement*,—their *spiritual union with Him and with each other*,—and their relation to that *covenant of grace* which has been established through His blood. It was *during* the supper that our Lord instituted the *first* branch of this holy sacrament. "As they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is My body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of Me."† It cannot, perhaps, be determined with certainty, whether this took place immediately *before* the conversation which led to the retirement of Judas,—so that even he, the traitor, would partake of the emblem of the Saviour's body,—or whether it *followed* that conversation.‡ But it is clear, that, even if Judas was now

* John xiii. 36—38.

† Matthew xxvi. 26; Mark xiv. 22, collated with Luke xxii. 19; 1 Corinthians xi. 23, 24.

‡ The Rev. Edward Greswell, whose opinions are entitled to

present, he had left the supper-chamber before the chosen emblem of the Saviour's blood was handed to the faithful eleven. For it was not until *after* they had supped,* that Jesus "took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it; for this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for you and for many, for the remission of sins." And then He added, "Verily I say unto you, I will drink no more of the fruit of the vine, until that day that I drink it new in the kingdom of God."†

In this solemn and impressive manner did the Redeemer institute the rite which, under the new covenant, was to take the place of the paschal supper under the old, and which was to show forth, in every succeeding age, *His own DEATH*, as the greatest fact in the mediatorial scheme, and to illustrate its relation to the government of God, and to the spiritual blessings which are offered to mankind. He had eaten, with the faithful companions of His toils on earth, the paschal lamb; and now, ere He rose from the table, He gathered their thoughts around Himself, as just about to be offered up, the true Sacrifice for human guilt. His mind was intent on the atonement which He was about to offer; and He had now only to comfort them in the prospect of their separation from Him, and to commend them to the

great respect, adopts the former view. The reasons which he alleges in support of it may be seen in his "Dissertations upon an Harmony of the Gospels." Diss. 42, vol. III., pp. 181, 182. Second Edition. But the point may be regarded as not yet settled.

* Luke xxii. 20; 1 Corinthians xi. 25, collated with Matthew xxvi. 27, 28; Mark xiv. 23, 24.

† Mark xiv. 25; Matthew xxvi. 29.

Father in prayer, and His preparatory work would be finished, and nothing would remain but the agony of the garden, and the shame and suffering of the cross.

The consolatory discourse which the Saviour proceeded to address to His apostles, has been recorded at length by St. John, who eagerly caught every word that fell from his Master's lips, and to whose mind the sayings of the Redeemer were vividly recalled, in after-years, by the promised Spirit of truth. It was a discourse eminently rich in spiritual instruction, and marked by the purest and tenderest affection for them. Our Lord commenced by saying, "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go, and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto Myself; that where I am, there ye may be also. And whither I go, ye know, and the way ye know." Thomas here interposed, and said, "Lord, we know not whither Thou goest; and how can we know the way?" Jesus replied, "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by Me." He then spoke of His essential oneness with the Father,—referred to the works of power which, after His departure, they should be enabled to perform,—and assured them, that the petitions which they should offer in His name should be granted. He especially dwelt on the animating truth, that, in honour of His mediatorial work, the Father would send to them the Holy Ghost, the Comforter, to fill their minds with heavenly light,—to bring to their remembrance all that He had taught them, and unfold to them the meaning of those declara-

tions of His which had appeared at the time mysterious and obscure,—to dwell in their hearts as the source of holy principles and affections,—to succour them amidst the difficulties of this probationary state,—and to form the earnest of eternal life. He enjoined on them a course of practical obedience to His commands, as the proper evidence of sincere love to Himself ; and assured them, that to every humble and obedient mind He would manifest Himself in all the riches of His grace. As the most precious legacy which He could bequeath, He left them His own “peace,”—a peace which infinitely transcends every worldly joy, and which can be maintained, through the grace of His Spirit, amidst all the sorrows and conflicts of earth. He reminded them, that His departure to the throne of His glory, and to the reward which the Father would bestow on Him as the Mediator, should rather be to them a cause of joy and triumph, than one of solicitude and grief. And then He adverted to the fierce assault which the prince of darkness was about to make upon Him, though all his efforts would be utterly unavailing to pollute His spirit, and the issue of the whole would be a bright and impressive display of the perfect character of His obedience to the Father, and of the complacency with which He had accomplished the Father’s will.*

Having reached this point in His address, the Saviour said to His apostles, “Arise, let us go hence :”† but, ere He left the supper-chamber, His love to them caused Him to resume His discourse, that He might give them yet additional lessons of heavenly wisdom, and place under new aspects some of those precious promises, on

* John xiv. 1—31.

† John xiv. 31.

which their minds were to repose under the trials and sorrows that awaited them. He illustrated the union between Himself and His people, by the figure of a vine and its branches; and showed, that it is only by an active and constant faith in Himself that our spiritual life can be maintained. He dwelt on the fruitfulness which will result from "abiding" in Himself; and affirmed the purpose of the Father, that all His people should glorify Him, by a course of cheerful obedience and benevolent effort. He again enjoined on His apostles, and, through them, on all His people, the cultivation and practical development of mutual love,—a love such as that which He had shown to them, and which He was about to display yet more impressively, by giving His life for their redemption. With great tenderness and affection, He adverted to their special nearness to Himself; and then forewarned them, that they must expect to be hated by the world, and must be prepared to endure, even as He had done, and was still about to do, reproach, contempt, and persecution. He dwelt on the fearful guilt of the Jewish nation, and especially of its leading men, in closing their eyes against the indubitable proofs which He had given them of the truth of His claims; and affirmed, that their rejection of Himself must be ascribed to their aversion from all that was pure, and spiritual, and heavenly.*

In the prospect of their arduous enterprise, as His ambassadors to the world, the Saviour encouraged them by again adverting to the gift of the Holy Ghost, as the Comforter and the Spirit of truth. He sought not to conceal from them any of the sufferings or indignities

* John xv. 1—25.

to which, in His cause, they would be exposed. He distinctly told them, “They shall put you out of the synagogues: yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you, will think that he doeth God service. And these things will they do unto you, because they have not known the Father, nor Me.” But then He assured them, that they should not be left alone in the fearful struggle; and that the presence of the Comforter would even more than compensate for the want of that personal intercourse with Himself, which had been so rich a source of consolation and strength. He promised them, that the power of the Spirit should be put forth on the world, in connexion with the truth which they proclaimed; and that that Divine Agent should unfold to their own minds all the depths of spiritual knowledge, and should unveil to them the glories of the mediatorial scheme.*

In bringing this part of His address to a close, the Redeemer adverted to His resurrection, as that which would soon follow His ignominious death; and to His renewed intercourse with them, during the brief interval between that event and His ascension to the Father. “A little while, and ye shall not see Me: and again, a little while, and ye shall see Me, because I go to the Father.”† Some of the disciples were greatly perplexed at these words, and wished to ask Him to explain His meaning. The Saviour knew this, and, in a beautiful and impressive manner, showed them, that the deep gloom which would soon encircle their minds, when they should behold Him extended upon the cross, and find His body committed to the silent tomb, would, after a little while, give place to sacred joy, when they should

* John xv. 26, 27; xvi. 1—15.

† John xvi. 16.

see Him restored to life; and this joy no man should take from them.* He adverted to the fulness of blessing which, under His mediatorial reign, should be imparted to them, in answer to the prayer of humble faith,—a faith which should have respect to the glories of His “name,” and the efficacy of His atonement and intercession. He assured them, that they were the objects of the Father’s complacency, since they had loved Him, and had believed that He came forth from God. And then He added, “I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world: again, I leave the world, and go to the Father.”†

The disciples now assured Him, that His last remarks had shed a clear light upon their minds, and had greatly confirmed their faith in His unbounded knowledge and His Divine mission.‡ And then the Saviour closed the conversation, by an affecting reference to their speedy desertion of Him in an hour of imminent peril, and by again adverting to the peace which, when restored by His grace, they should find in Him, though in the world persecutions and sufferings might attend them. “Do ye now believe? Behold, the hour cometh, yea, is now come, that ye shall be scattered, every man to his own, and shall leave Me alone: and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with Me. These things I have spoken unto you, that in Me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.”§

The Redeemer had now concluded His affectionate address to His apostles; but, ere He left the supper-

* John xvi. 17—22.

† John xvi. 23—28.

‡ John xvi. 29, 30.

§ John xvi. 31—33.

chamber with them, He solemnly commended them to the Father in prayer. Lifting up His eyes to heaven, He said, "Father, the hour is come; glorify Thy Son, that Thy Son also may glorify Thee." He went on to advert to some of the leading features of the mediatorial scheme, and affirmed, that His own work on earth was now nearly accomplished, so that He looked forward to His ascension to that glory which He had enjoyed with the Father before the world was. He then prayed for His apostles,—that they might be kept by His almighty energy and abounding grace,—that they might be distinguished by a spiritual and unearthly oneness,—and that they might be sanctified through the truth, applied by the Spirit to their hearts, and thus be qualified for the duties of their high and holy mission.* But He did not restrict His intercession to the immediate companions of His toils on earth. He prayed for all, in every age, who should believe on Him through their word,—that "they all might be one,"—that a common spiritual life, resulting from their union with Himself, might attract them to each other, and that their mutual sympathy might be so manifested to the world, as to produce a universal acknowledgment of the truth of His claims, and the reality of His gracious power. He referred with complacency to the ultimate participation of all His people in the glory to which He was about to ascend. Beyond the sorrows which now awaited Him, and beyond the conflicts of His church in successive ages, He looked forward to the consummation of the mediatorial scheme, when all who had trusted in His atonement, and had been devoted to His service,

* John xvii. 1—19.

should be with Him, to gaze upon His perfections, and enjoy His eternal friendship.*

When the Redeemer had offered up this prayer, the usual hymn was sung; and He went forth with His apostles, over the brook Cedron, to the Mount of Olives.† As they passed along, He again told them that in that very night they should all “be offended because of Him,” and should indeed forsake Him in the extremity of His grief and shame. He referred to the remarkable prediction, “I will smite the Shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered,” as just about to receive its accomplishment; but He added, that when He should have risen from the dead, He would go before them into Galilee, and there, amidst the scenes of His former labours, give them a public and convincing proof of the validity of all His claims.‡ Peter, still warm in his affection for his Lord, and eager to express the unconquerable love which glowed within his breast, replied, “Though all men shall be offended because of Thee, yet will I never be offended.” The Saviour again admonished him, how soon his boasted firmness would give way: “Verily I say unto thee, That this day, even in this night, before the cock crow twice, thou shalt deny Me thrice.” Peter could not believe that he was capable of so base an act; and renewed his earnest protestation of unwavering fidelity and attachment. He affirmed, that not even the certain prospect of death could induce him to deny his Master; and in this declaration they all concurred.§

* John xvii. 20—26.

† John xviii. 1; Matthew xxvi. 30; Mark xiv. 26; Luke xxii. 39.

‡ Matthew xxvi. 31, 32; Mark xiv. 27, 28.

§ Matthew xxvi. 33—35; Mark xiv. 29—31.

It was now, probably, near midnight, and the hour of the Saviour's deepest agony had arrived. A new scene opens upon our view; and, with chastened and solemn feelings, we have to contemplate "the Man of sorrows" bending beneath the weight of that anguish which our sins brought upon Him.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE REDEEMER'S AGONY IN THE GARDEN OF GETHSEMANE.

HIS APPREHENSION, TRIAL, AND DEATH.

NEAR the foot of the Mount of Olives, and on the road to Bethany, lay Gethsemane,—a place ever memorable in the history of the Christian redemption. Like the other suburbs of Jerusalem, it was full of gardens; and to one of these the Saviour had frequently resorted, on His visits to the metropolis, for the purpose of retirement and meditation.* There were many in that neighbourhood, and especially in the village of Bethany, who revered His character, and valued His teaching; and it is a pleasing thought, that this garden must have been placed at His service by its owner, that He might at any time enjoy there a degree of quiet and repose, after the toils of His public ministry. This familiar spot was now to become the scene of His deepest sorrow; and He who had so often walked there in calm and delightful communion with the Father, was now to feel

* John xviii. 1, 2.

a peculiar anguish, such as had never before oppressed a human spirit.

As the Redeemer went into this garden with His apostles, He gave them the general charge, “Pray that ye enter not into temptation;” and then, leaving eight of them near the entrance, He took with Him Peter, James, and John, to be the witnesses of His deep agony. With these He retired to the recesses of the garden, and said to them, “My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even unto death: tarry ye here, and watch with Me.”* Then, leaving even the favoured three at a little distance, He went forward, and kneeled down, and afterwards fell on His face, and prayed to the Father, that, if it were possible, the “cup” of which He was then drinking might pass from Him; adding, “Nevertheless not as I will, but as Thou wilt.” While the Saviour was thus praying, there appeared an angel from heaven, to strengthen Him,—His humanity almost sinking under the pressure of the mental anguish which He endured; and such were the depth and intensity of His feelings, that a bloody sweat came profusely from His body, and fell in great drops to the ground.†

Here we may pause, and reflect on this solemn and mysterious scene. We would not, with irreverent curiosity, press into the Saviour’s retirement, or attempt to unfold the deep emotions which now filled His breast. We have rather to stand at a distance, and gaze, with silent awe, upon the almost fainting Sufferer. The “hour” of which He had so often spoken, had now arrived; and He who had given peace to the troubled

* Matthew xxvi. 36—38; Mark xiv. 32—34; Luke xxii. 39, 40.

† Matthew xxvi. 39; Mark xiv. 35, 36; Luke xxii. 41—44.

mind, and had diffused happiness and joy among the afflicted of our race, was now Himself the subject of oppressive and exhausting sorrow. It is almost needless to remark, that this anguish could not have been the result of any personal transgressions. He "knew no sin;" His mind was ever distinguished by perfect purity and goodness; and His entire life on earth had been one of unfailing obedience to the Father's will, and of condescending benignity to man. The very fact that He suffered thus, can only be explained by regarding Him as the Substitute of our fallen race. The burden of the world's iniquities lay upon His spirit.* He took the place of the guilty; and as He thought of the sins of men, the intensity of His anguish was in proportion to His vivid and exquisite perception of the moral baseness of transgression. The powers of darkness, also, were probably permitted to harass His pure and heavenly mind. On this very evening, He had said to His disciples, "The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in Me:" and we have every reason to regard the mysterious scene of Gethsemane, as one of the occasions on which He endured the predicted assault of the great adversary of mankind.

The prayer which the Redeemer addressed to the Father,—"O My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me,"—cannot be understood as referring to His deliverance from death. From the very period of the fall, His *death* had been set forth as the great sacrifice for human guilt. The types of the patriarchal and Mosaic dispensations had all pointed to His effectual atonement. The Saviour Himself had repeatedly

* Isaiah liii. 4—6.

declared the necessity of His death, in order to the redemption of mankind; He had, on several occasions, foretold its minute circumstances, and had appealed to the triumph of His resurrection, as the crowning confirmation of His claims; and, on that very night, He had instituted the sacred rite which was to commemorate His death until the very end of time. These considerations, to say the least, would render it extremely improbable that our Lord should now ask to be exempted from the death that was before Him. The petition which He offered up had, we conceive, a far different import. The "cup" of which He spoke, was that cup of bitterness and anguish which He was then drinking: and His request was, that if it were possible,—if it could be done without impairing the efficacy of His atonement, or obscuring that bright and full display of the Divine perfections which His vicarious sufferings should present to the rational universe,—the severity of His mental anguish might be alleviated, and its duration shortened.

It is probable that nearly one hour passed away while the Saviour thus agonized and prayed: and, at the end of that time, He came to the three disciples, and found them oppressed with sleep. Addressing Peter, in particular, He said, "Simon, sleepest thou? couldst not thou watch with Me one hour? Watch ye and pray, lest ye enter into temptation. The spirit truly is ready, but the flesh is weak."* He then left them, still feeling an oppressive weight of sorrow upon His spirit, and again prayed earnestly to the Father,—expressing His perfect resignation to His will, while yet He asked

* Matthew xxvi. 40, 41; Mark xiv. 37, 38.

for the mitigation of His deep anguish. After a little while He returned to them, and found them asleep again; for their spirits were exhausted, and their eyes were heavy.* He again left them, and renewed His supplications to the Father; and then, aware that the traitor was approaching, with his band of armed men, He went to them the third time, and, awaking them, apprised them that the moment of danger was at hand. "The hour is come," He said; "behold, the Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Rise up, let us go; lo, he that betrayeth Me is at hand."† Accompanied by the three, He returned to His other apostles, whom He had left at the entrance of the garden, and, arousing them also from sleep, charged them to pray, lest they should enter into temptation.‡

While the Saviour was yet addressing them, Judas, accompanied by a large body of men armed with swords and staves, and carrying lamps and torches, came to the retired spot in which they were.§ Jesus, though He intended to yield Himself into their hands, first gave them an impressive proof of His dignity and power, and showed them with how great ease He could wither all their strength. He advanced to meet them, and asked, "Whom seek ye?" They replied, "Jesus of Nazareth." He said to them, "I am He;" and immediately "they went backward, and fell to the ground." Recovering from their consternation, they rose, and the Saviour again asked them, "Whom seek ye?" Again they

* Matthew xxvi. 42, 43; Mark xiv. 39, 40.

† Matthew xxvi. 44—46; Mark xiv. 41, 42.

‡ Luke xxii. 45, 46.

§ Matthew xxvi. 47; Mark xiv. 43; Luke xxii. 47; John xviii. 3.

replied, "Jesus of Nazareth :" and our Lord, though He did not a second time exert His power to lay them prostrate, but indirectly intimated that He would surrender Himself into their hands, charged them not to molest His disciples, but allow them quietly to depart. He said to them, "I have told you that I am He: if therefore ye seek Me, let these go their way."* At this juncture, Judas advanced towards our Lord, and kissed Him, according to the signal which he had agreed upon with his followers. The Saviour addressed him mildly, "Friend, wherefore art thou come?" and then, after a momentary pause, sought to arouse his conscience by the question, "Judas, betrayest thou the Son of man with a kiss?"† Meanwhile, the officers of the chief priests rushed forward to apprehend our Lord; and some of the disciples, perceiving them about to lay violent hands on Him whom they revered and loved, asked, "Lord, shall we smite with the sword?" The impetuosity of Peter led him, without waiting for a reply, to attempt the rescue of his Master. He drew his sword, and struck a servant of the high priest, who had probably taken hold of our Lord, and cut off his right ear. But the Redeemer at once interposed, with calm dignity. He protected Peter from the violence of the band that had come against Him, and soothed their irritated feelings, by saying, "Suffer ye thus far;" and then, touching the ear of the wounded man, restored him to soundness and vigour. He reproved His disciple for resorting to such a method of defence; and reminded him, that if He had wished to rescue Himself from the power of His assail-

* John xviii. 4—9.

† Matthew xxvi. 48—50; Mark xiv. 44, 45; Luke xxii. 47, 48.

ants, He might have commanded the services even of the angelic host; but that He voluntarily gave Himself up to death, to fulfil the prophetic Scriptures, and accomplish the designs of the Eternal Father. He said to Peter, “Put up again thy sword into its place: for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword. Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to My Father, and He shall presently give Me more than twelve legions of angels? But how then shall the Scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be?”* Then, addressing the multitude, and especially the chief priests and captains of the temple who stood among them, He said, “Are ye come out as against a thief, with swords and staves to take Me? When I was daily with you in the temple, ye stretched forth no hands against Me: but this is your hour, and the power of darkness.”† The demeanour of our Lord, at this critical juncture, evinced the purity and greatness of His character. No agitation or alarm ruffled His spirit; but, with a calm and collected mind, He surrendered Himself into the hands of His enemies, while He gave them the most convincing proofs that He retained His control over universal nature. His disciples, perceiving that He allowed Himself to be seized and bound, and that the officers of the chief priests were beginning to lead Him away, “forsook Him and fled.”‡

The band that had apprehended Jesus took Him first to the house of Annas, the father-in-law of Caiaphas the high priest; and soon afterwards, at the desire of Annas,

* Matthew xxvi. 50—54; Mark xiv. 46, 47; Luke xxii. 49—51; John xviii. 10, 11.

† Luke xxii. 52, 53; Matthew xxvi. 55; Mark xiv. 48, 49.

‡ John xviii. 12; Matthew xxvi. 56; Mark xiv. 50.

conducted Him to the palace of the latter. The Sanhedrim, though it was yet night, was immediately convened to sit in judgment upon Him.* Meanwhile Peter and John, who had recovered a little from their alarm, followed the Redeemer afar off, and went into the palace of the high priest, to await the issue of the proceedings. A fire had been kindled by the servants in the midst of the hall, and Peter sat down among them, and warmed himself.†

The high priest appears to have commenced the investigation, by asking our Lord respecting His disciples and His doctrine. The Saviour's reply was dignified and impressive:—"I spake openly to the world; I ever taught in the synagogue, and in the temple, whither the Jews always resort; and in secret have I said nothing. Why askest thou Me? ask them which heard Me, what I have said unto them: behold, they know what I said." Immediately one of the officers of the high priest struck Him with the palm of his hand, saying, "Answerest thou the high priest so?" The Redeemer turned to him, and said, "If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil: but if well, why smitest thou Me?"‡

The council now eagerly sought for persons who would attest any charge against our Lord, which might justify them in pronouncing Him to be worthy of death. Several came forward, but their statements were insufficient and contradictory. The most plausible accusation which they could allege, was, that He had spoken against

* John xviii. 13, 24; Matthew xxvi. 57; Mark xiv. 53; Luke xxii. 54.

† John xviii. 15, 16; Matthew xxvi. 58; Mark xiv. 54; Luke xxii. 54, 55.

‡ John xviii. 19—23.

the temple, by affirming, “I will destroy this temple that is made with hands, and within three days I will build another made without hands.”* But the evidence of the two witnesses who preferred this charge was not consistent; and the council felt that they could not, with any shadow of justice, condemn Him to death on the ground of it.† Their only resource, therefore, was, to obtain, if possible, from His own lips, some declaration which they might pronounce to be blasphemous, as involving an assumption of the peculiar glory of Jehovah. The Redeemer had hitherto preserved silence in regard to the accusations brought against Him; but now the high priest rose from his seat, and appealed to Him, “Answerest thou nothing? what is it which these witness against thee?”‡ Still, however, our Lord remained silent; and then the high priest addressed Him with peculiar solemnity, “I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God.” In proposing this question, Caiaphas well knew that on several occasions, and even in His last discourses in the temple, He had claimed to be the Son of God: and as that claim involved a participation of the Divine nature, and the possession of Divine perfections, the council were prepared, if He would only avow it before them, to declare Him a blasphemer, and adjudge Him to be worthy of death. Jesus, thus solemnly called upon, distinctly and emphatically replied in the affirmative; and added, that soon He should be exalted to the right hand of the Father, and should be revealed in glory as the Judge of all mankind. Then the high priest rent his clothes, and,

* Matthew xxvi. 59—61; Mark xiv. 55—58. † Mark xiv. 59.

‡ Matthew xxvi. 62; Mark xiv. 60.

addressing the council, said, "He hath spoken blasphemy; what further need have we of witnesses? Behold, now ye have heard his blasphemy. What think ye?" They replied, "He is guilty of death."* And now the malignant feelings of many who stood around Him began to vent themselves in the indignities which they heaped upon His sacred person. They spat in His face, and struck Him with their fists, and some with the palms of their hands; and, blindfolding Him, they again struck Him, and tauntingly said, "Prophesy unto us, thou Messiah, Who is he that smote thee?"† But no word of anger escaped His lips. Amidst the vulgar insults of that hour, He was meek and placid; nor did He shrink from any portion of the suffering and contempt which the Father permitted to come upon Him.

But the hall where the Redeemer thus meekly endured the taunts and buffetings of ungodly men had now become the scene of Peter's fall. Thrice, ere this examination closed, did that disciple who had been so sincerely and warmly attached to his Master, deny Him before the servants of the high priest: and, at length, when he had affirmed, even with oaths and curses, his utter ignorance of Him, and the cock crew the second time, Jesus turned and looked upon him, and his heart was touched and broken. The Saviour's warnings came vividly to his remembrance; the affecting scenes of his past intercourse with his Lord crowded upon his mind; and, under a deep conviction of his own ingratitude and baseness, he "went out and wept bitterly."‡

* Matthew xxvi. 63—66; Mark xiv. 61—64.

† Matthew xxvi. 67, 68; Mark xiv. 65; Luke xxii. 63—65.

‡ Matthew xxvi. 69—75; Mark xiv. 66—72; Luke xxii. 56—62; John xviii. 17, 18, 25—27.

As soon as it was day, the Sanhedrim again assembled in their usual chamber, to repeat those inquiries to which, in the night, the Saviour had so distinctly replied, and to consider how they might secure the consent of the Roman governor to His death.* The Redeemer again avowed before the council, that He was indeed the Son of God; and affirmed, that the time was coming when He should “sit on the right hand of the power of God.” They listened, with a malignant satisfaction, to these declarations, and said one to another, “What need we any further witness? for we ourselves have heard of his own mouth.”†

They now led Him to the hall of the Roman governor, bound as a criminal who had exposed himself to the severest penalty of the law.‡ Being anxious not to contract any ceremonial defilement, they did not themselves enter the judgment-hall; and Pilate, to oblige them, came forth, and inquired, “What accusation bring ye against this man?” They replied, “If he were not a malefactor, we would not have delivered him up unto thee.” Pilate then said to them, “Take ye him, and judge him according to your law.” The Jews answered, that they had not the power to put any man to death without Pilate’s consent,—and that they regarded the case of Jesus as one which called even for that extreme punishment.§ They proceeded, consequently, to allege the charge which they had determined to bring against Him, as most likely to affect the mind of the Roman

* Luke xxii. 66, collated with Matthew xxvii. 1; Mark xv. 1.

† Luke xxii. 66—71.

‡ Matthew xxvii. 2; Mark xv. 1; Luke xxiii. 1; John xviii. 28.

§ John xviii. 28—32.

governor, and induce him to consent to His death. "We found this fellow," they said, "perverting the nation, and forbidding to give tribute to Cæsar, saying that he himself is the Messiah, a King."* Pilate then entered into the judgment-hall, and called Jesus, and asked Him, "Art thou the King of the Jews?" To this inquiry the Saviour replied in the affirmative; but at the same time He distinctly stated, that He was a King in a peculiar sense, not in that which Pilate, as a Roman, would attach to the phrase, but in one which the Jewish Scriptures would illustrate and sanction. His kingdom, He affirmed, was *spiritual*; and the chief means of its establishment, the powerful application of *truth* to the understanding and the conscience.†

This explanation of Jesus fully satisfied the mind of the Roman governor, that He had not been guilty of any seditious conduct. He thought, probably, that He was an enthusiast; and yet he felt a degree of respect for the purity and uprightness of His character. Pilate went forth, therefore, to the chief priests and elders, followed by his august prisoner, and declared his full conviction that He was innocent of any attempt against the Roman government.‡ They repeated the charge of sedition with increased vehemence, alleging against Him many things which they could not prove; and especially affirming, that "he had stirred up the people, teaching throughout all Judæa, beginning from Galilee unto that place."§ The Redeemer preserved a calm and dignified

* Luke xxiii. 2.

† Luke xxiii. 3; Matthew xxvii. 11; Mark xv. 2; John xviii. 33—37.

‡ Luke xxiii. 4; John xviii. 38.

§ Luke xxiii. 5.

silence in respect to their unfounded accusations; and even when the governor appealed to Him, “Hearest thou not how many things they witness against thee?” He still remained silent and unmoved, so that Pilate looked upon Him with utter astonishment.* The mention of Galilee, however, suggested to Pilate the thought, that He might belong to the jurisdiction of Herod; and he asked, “whether the man were a Galilean.” Being answered in the affirmative, he gladly availed himself of the circumstance, to send Him to Herod, who was at that time in Jerusalem.† This prince had long wished to see Jesus, and hoped that the great Prophet whose fame had reached him, would gratify him by performing some miracle in his presence. This, however, would not have been suitable to the simplicity and dignity of the Redeemer’s character; nor did He satisfy the idle curiosity of Herod, by replying to his various questions. The chief priests and scribes stood there, and vehemently accused Him; but Herod viewed Him rather as an object of contempt and derision, than of serious condemnation, and with his men of war “set Him at nought, and mocked Him, and arrayed Him in a gorgeous robe, and sent Him again to Pilate.”‡

When the Saviour was thus led back to the Roman prætorium, the governor again called together the chief priests, and the rulers, and the people generally, and solemnly declared before them, that neither himself nor Herod had found Him guilty of any crime which could justly expose Him to the penalty of death.§ Perceiving, however, that He was regarded with envy and hatred by

* Matthew xxvii. 12—14; Mark xv. 3—5. † Luke xxiii. 6, 7.

‡ Luke xxiii. 8—11.

§ Luke xxiii. 13—15.

the leading men among the Jews,* Pilate endeavoured to effect His rescue, and yet, in some measure, satisfy their malignant feelings, by releasing Him under circumstances which should exhibit Him as an object of pity and contempt.

The custom had long been established, that at the feast of the passover the governor should release unto the people a prisoner, whom they might desire; and some among the multitude began now to request him to show them this mark of deference and respect.† It occurred to Pilate, that he might avail himself of this custom to save the life of Jesus, and yet mark Him out as a degraded man, indebted to the favour of the people for exemption from an ignominious death; and to this he proposed to add scourging, so as to treat His pretended royalty with utter contempt and scorn.‡ To secure the selection of our Lord as the prisoner to be released, he limited the choice of the people to two,—Jesus and Barabbas; the latter being a man of infamous character, who had openly engaged in an insurrection, and in that insurrection had deliberately committed murder.§ He did not conceive it possible, that such a man should be preferred to Jesus, whose morals were pure and unblemished, and whose only crime appeared to be, that, in some mysterious and spiritual sense, He claimed to be the King of the Jews. But the chief priests persuaded the assembled people, that they should ask Barabbas, and clamour for the death of Jesus. And when Pilate

* Matthew xxvii. 18; Mark xv. 10.

† Mark xv. 6, 8; Matthew xxvii. 15; Luke xxiii. 17.

‡ Luke xxiii. 16.

§ Matthew xxvii. 16, 17; Mark xv. 7; Luke xxiii. 19.

pressed it, again and again, upon their consideration, they reiterated their request, and cried out respecting Jesus, "Crucify him, crucify him."* Thus was an additional indignity cast upon our blessed Lord. A murderer was preferred to "the Prince of life,"—to Him whose course on earth had been one of unmixed purity and goodness, and who had scattered blessings wherever He had exercised His ministry.

Pilate now proceeded to execute the second part of his plan, in the hope that the sight of Jesus as a degraded and despised man might at length cause them to relent. He directed some of his soldiers to take the Redeemer and scourge Him. They did so; and then, to deride His pretensions to royalty, they "platted a crown of thorns, and put it on His head, and put on Him a purple robe, and said, 'Hail, king of the Jews!' and smote Him with their hands."† Pilate now went forth to the chief priests and the multitude, and announced that he was about to bring out Jesus to them, treated with mockery and contempt; but that it was his deliberate judgment, that He had committed no offence against the Roman power, and that he could not consign Him to death. Then was the Saviour led forth, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe; and Pilate exclaimed, "Behold the man!" But the chief priests and the officers cried out with renewed vehemence, "Crucify him! crucify him!"‡ Pilate said to them, "Take ye him, and crucify him: for I find no fault in him."§ And now it was, that they disclosed to the

* Matthew xxvii. 20—23; Mark xv. 11—14; Luke xxiii. 18—22; John xviii. 40.

† John xix. 1—3.

‡ John xix. 4—6; Luke xxiii. 23.

§ John xix. 6.

Roman governor the real ground on which they had condemned Him. Hitherto they had represented Him as a seditious person,—one whose claim of *royalty* was injurious to the rights of Cæsar; but it was the design of God that the *personal dignity* of the Redeemer should be formally brought before the notice of the governor, that all the agents of the Roman power might be aware of the true nature of the controversy at issue, and might perceive, when He should rise again from the dead, that His claim to be possessed even of Divine perfections was established, and that He was the proper object of religious confidence and love. The chief priests said to Pilate, “We have a law, and by our law he ought to die, because he made himself the Son of God.”* This announcement filled the mind of the governor with a degree of awe. He again went into the judgment-hall, and inquired of our Lord, “Whence art thou?” But Jesus remained silent. The mind of Pilate was not in a fit state to have the mystery of the Redeemer’s person unfolded to it; nor did it become the dignity of our Lord, in such circumstances, to explain the lofty truths involved in the question proposed to Him. The governor, surprised at His silence, said to Him, “Speakest thou not unto me? Knowest thou not that I have power to crucify thee, and have power to release thee?” The Saviour replied, “Thou couldest have no power at all against Me, except it were given thee from above: therefore he that delivered Me unto thee hath the greater sin.”† This development of the character of Jesus impressed the mind of Pilate, yet more deeply, with a conviction of His perfect innocence; and, going

* John xix. 7.

† John xix. 8—11.

forth to the Jews, he again endeavoured to soften their feelings towards Him, and induce them to consent to His discharge. He appears, indeed, at this time, to have contemplated releasing our Lord in spite of their continued clamour; but the chief priests and their officers cried out, "If thou let this man go, thou art not Cæsar's friend : whosoever maketh himself a king speaketh against Cæsar."*

The fears of Pilate relative to his own honour and safety were now awakened; and being aware that if he persisted in releasing Jesus, in defiance of the remonstrances of the leading men among the Jews, they might so represent his conduct at the imperial court, as to render him an object of suspicion, he began to give way to their malignant clamour. He ordered Jesus to be again brought forth, and, sitting down solemnly on the judgment-seat, he said to the assembled Jews, "Behold your king!" † They cried out, "Away with him, away with him, crucify him!" Pilate replied, "Shall I crucify your king?" The chief priests answered, "We have no king but Cæsar." ‡ Perceiving that a tumult was likely to be made, Pilate now called for water, and washed his hands before them all, saying, "I am innocent of the blood of this just person; see ye to it;" and with this impressive action, he delivered Jesus to be crucified, and released to them the murderer Barabbas. The infatuated multitude exclaimed, "His blood be on us, and on our children," and triumphed in the prospect of the fearful tragedy that was at hand. §

* John xix. 12. † John xix. 13, 14. ‡ John xix. 15.

§ Matthew xxvii. 24—26; Mark xv. 15; Luke xxiii. 23—25; John xix. 16.

The Redeemer was now handed over to the soldiers, in order to the execution of the sentence which had been passed upon Him. The whole band was gathered around Him, and began to deride His assumed royalty. Still clad in the purple robe, and wearing the crown of thorns, He was the object of their bitter taunts and insults. They put a reed in His right hand, and, bowing the knee before Him, saluted Him, as they had done before, "Hail, king of the Jews!" and then they spat upon Him, and, taking the reed, smote Him on the head.* The Saviour bore all this with meekness and patience. No word of indignant complaint was heard from His lips; no feeling of resentment ruffled His pure and benign, but now sorrowful spirit, intent, as it was, on the accomplishment of man's redemption. His deportment under this cruel mockery, and in every subsequent stage of His sufferings, was in strict accordance with the prophetic declaration, "He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He openeth not His mouth."†

Meanwhile, the cross on which He was to suffer was made ready, and the title selected by Pilate to express the charge against Him was attached to it. When this was done, the soldiers took the purple robe from off Him, and put His own raiment on Him, and led Him away towards the spot on which He was to be crucified.‡ At first, the Redeemer had to bear the weight of His own cross;§ but as His physical strength was probably

* Matthew xxvii. 27—30; Mark xv. 16—19. † Isaiah liii. 7.

‡ Matthew xxvii. 31; Mark xv. 20: see also Matthew xxvii. 37; Mark xv. 26; Luke xxiii. 38; John xix. 19—22.

§ John xix. 17.

impaired by the deep mental anguish through which He had passed, the soldiers laid hold of one Simon, a Cyrenian, whom they met on their way, and compelled him to share the burden of it with our Lord.* As they went through the streets of Jerusalem, many who had listened to His teaching, and had beheld His miracles, with deep interest, followed the mournful procession with unaffected grief; and many of the women of that city, touched with pity and sadness, "bewailed and lamented Him." But the Redeemer paused, and, turning to them, said, "Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for Me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children. For, behold, the days are coming, in the which they shall say, Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bare, and the paps which never gave suck. Then shall they begin to say to the mountains, Fall on us; and to the hills, Cover us. For if they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry?"†

But in this procession there were two others, who also appeared as criminals, and were bearing their crosses towards the place of execution. The holy Jesus was condemned to suffer and die, in company with men who had seized the property of others, and had been distinguished by many acts of violence and injustice.‡ Thus was the prophetic statement remarkably fulfilled, "And He was numbered with the transgressors;"§ and thus, as far as man could arrange, He was set forth as an object of utter detestation and scorn.

* Matthew xxvii. 32; Mark xv. 21; Luke xxiii. 26.

† Luke xxiii. 27—31.

‡ Luke xxiii. 32; Matthew xxvii. 38; Mark xv. 27.

§ Isaiah liii. 12. See also Mark xv. 28.

The eminence on which the crosses were to be erected, was on the north-west side of the city, and a little without the walls. It was the ordinary place of execution, and it derived its name of Calvary, or Golgotha,—the place of skulls,—from the abundance of the mouldering or bleaching remains of human bodies which lay there.* Having reached this spot, the soldiers offered our Lord sour wine mixed with some bitter ingredient, to drink, before the process of crucifixion commenced; but when He had just tasted of it, He declined to drink it, that He might not even seem to attempt to mitigate His sufferings.†

And now they nailed Him to the cross: and while the rude soldiers were driving the nails through the palms of His hands, and through His feet,—parts exquisitely sensitive,—He uttered the prayer, “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.”‡

The crosses were erected: that of our adorable Lord being in the middle,—with His face, in all probability, turned towards the city,—and those of the two thieves on either hand.§ The soldiers now proceeded to divide His raiment among themselves. There were four to whom the charge of His erucifixion had been assigned; the same number was probably allotted to each of the others; and over these was placed a centurion, to superintend the fearful tragedy. The four soldiers, therefore, who had nailed the Saviour to the cross, distributed His clothing into four parts, and cast lots, which of these portions each of them should take. Perceiving His

* Luke xxiii. 33; John xix. 17; Matthew xxvii. 33; Mark xv. 22.

† Matthew xxvii. 34; Mark xv. 23. ‡ Luke xxiii. 34.

§ Luke xxiii. 33; John xix. 18; Matthew xxvii. 38; Mark xv. 27.

inner garment to be “without seam, woven from the top throughout,” they said one to another, “Let us not rend it, but cast lots for it, whose it shall be.” In this, too, the prophetic intimation was fulfilled, “They part My garments among them, and cast lots upon My vesture.”*

It was now about nine o’clock;† and the Redeemer hung on the accursed tree,—the object of scorn and hatred to the chief priests, and the ungodly who had clamoured for His blood, but of affectionate solicitude to many who had listened to His ministry with profound attention, and knew the purity and goodness of His character. For three hours the light of day shone upon that spectacle; and the gaze of multitudes was fixed upon the Sufferer.‡ Some who passed by, remembering those words of His, which had been so long treasured up against Him, “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up;” and remembering, also, the distinct and emphatic manner in which He had claimed, even before the Sanhedrim, to be the Son of God; wagged their heads, and said, “Ah, thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days, save thyself. If thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross.”§ The chief priests and elders, also, crowded to the scene, and as they looked upon the Prophet of Galilee, now treated as an outcast, and soon about to expire upon the cross, they said with malignant exultation, “He saved others; himself he cannot save. Let the Messiah, the King of Israel, descend now from the

* Matthew xxvii. 35; Mark xv. 24; Luke xxiii. 34; John xix. 23, 24. See also Psalm xxii. 18.

† Mark xv. 25.

‡ Luke xxiii. 35.

§ Matthew xxvii. 39, 40; Mark xv. 29, 30.

cross, that we may see and believe. He trusted in God; let Him deliver him now, if He will have him: for he said, I am the Son of God."* Unconsciously were these deluded and wicked men fulfilling one of the predictions of the ancient Scriptures relative to the Messiah's sufferings, and even giving utterance to the very words of the inspired record:—"All they that see Me laugh Me to scorn: they shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying, He trusted on the Lord that He would deliver Him: let Him deliver Him, seeing He delighted in Him."† The soldiers, also, who had sat down to watch Him, derided His claims to royalty; and when their dinner-hour arrived, they offered Him some of their beverage, saying, "If thou be the King of the Jews, save thyself."‡ One of the thieves, likewise, who were crucified with Him, retaining to the last his hatred of every thing pure and good, joined in the reproaches that were cast upon Him; but the heart of the other was touched by the entire demeanour of our Lord; and remembering, probably, what he had heard in former days of His teaching and His claims, and convinced, by a special illumination from above, that, notwithstanding this accumulation of ignominy and suffering, Jesus was indeed the true Messiah, he acknowledged Him even on the cross, as one about to be invested with a glorious kingdom. Reproving his companion, he said, "Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this Man hath done nothing amiss." Then, addressing the Redeemer, he said, "Lord,

* Matthew xxvii. 41—43; Mark xv. 31, 32; Luke xxiii. 35.

† Psalm xxii. 7, 8.

‡ Luke xxiii. 36, 37.

remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom." Jesus accepted this expression of a lively faith in Himself, and assured the penitent and believing thief of eternal life and blessedness:—"Verily I say unto thee, To-day shalt thou be with Me in paradise."*

But there were some standing near the cross, whose hearts were filled with sorrowful emotions, and who gazed even with anguish upon that overwhelming spectacle. One of these was Mary, the honoured mother of our Lord. She who had watched with interest the development of His more than human purity, and wisdom, and goodness,—who had marked with reverent affection His career as a Prophet, and had seen how all nature owned His touch, and obeyed His word,—now beheld Him lifted up as a criminal and an outcast, enduring all the sufferings of the cross, and all the taunts and revilings of His enemies.† The Saviour well knew the extremity of her grief; and, ere the veil of darkness was drawn over the scene of His humiliation, commended her to the filial attachment and care of His beloved disciple John, who also was standing near with an agonized and bleeding heart. John dutifully and gratefully accepted the charge confided to him; and at once removed her from the spot, that she might not witness the Redeemer's final agony.‡

During three hours, the mockery and insults of the chief priests, and the elders, and an ungodly multitude, had been continued with only occasional pauses. It was to them a time of triumph and exultation: the distinguished Prophet seemed to be abandoned by heaven

* Luke xxiii. 39—43.

† John xix. 25.

‡ John xix. 26, 27.

and earth, and to hang there in utter helplessness. But when the hour of noon arrived, a preternatural darkness overspread the land of Judæa, and veiled the august Sufferer from their gaze. The eternal Father thus marked the momentous character of that fearful tragedy, and awakened a feeling of awe in every mind that was not utterly base and obdurate. Nor was it a transient darkness which rested on the scene of the Saviour's sufferings, and on the whole of that guilty land which had rejected Him. It continued for three hours;* and during these, the Redeemer, hidden from the view of men, experienced, as we have every reason to believe, a renewal of that deep anguish of spirit which came upon Him in the garden of Gethsemane. The insults of His enemies, and the acute physical suffering which the process of crucifixion involved, were not all that He had to endure. There was a peculiar sorrow of heart, into the depth of which it is not for us to penetrate. He had taken the place of a guilty world; and as He bore the burden of our sins, He felt a "travail of soul" which only One so great and holy could have sustained. In this season of darkness, we may well conceive, the hosts of hell would seek to harass Him who had invaded their empire, and who was so soon, through these very sufferings, to triumph over them;† while the angelic hosts who had rejoiced when He came into our world, and had watched His ministry with deep interest, would crowd around the scene of Calvary, to behold the offering up of the great Atonement to which the Divine

* Matthew xxvii. 45; Mark xv. 33; Luke xxiii. 44, 45.

† The views here suggested appear to be justified by Luke xxii. 53; John xiv. 30; xii. 31, 32.

government had had respect from the very period of the fall.*

But when the ninth hour, or three o'clock, arrived,—the hour of the offering of the evening sacrifice,—the darkness cleared away, and the meek Sufferer was again visible to all. It was then that He uttered, with a loud voice, the first words of the twenty-second Psalm,—words indicative of the awful mental anguish through which He had been passing:—“Eloi, Eloi, lama sabacthani,” “My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?”† Some of those who stood near said, “Behold, he calleth Elias.” Again the Redeemer, after a momentary pause, said, “I thirst:” and straightway one of them ran, and filling a sponge with the vinegar, or sour wine, which the Roman soldiers had brought with them as their beverage, put it upon a stick of hyssop-wood, and handed it to Him.‡ In this, too, some of the minute intimations of the prophetic Psalms were fulfilled; though they who surrounded the cross little thought, that in everything they did they were contributing to this result.§ Some of them, supposing that He had actually invoked the help of Elijah, said, “Let alone: let us see whether Elijah will come to take him down.”|| But an end was now to be put to all their taunts, and to all the anguish that had filled the breast of the Redeemer. The purposes of Divine justice

* Many passages of the New Testament might be adduced in support of this sentiment. We may refer, in particular, to 1 Peter i. 11, 12; 1 Timothy iii. 16; Revelation v. 11, 12.

† Matthew xxvii. 45, 46; Mark xv. 33, 34.

‡ John xix. 28, 29; Matthew xxvii. 48; Mark xv. 36.

§ See Psalm xxii. 15; lxix. 21, together with John xix. 28.

|| Matthew xxvii. 47—49; Mark xv. 35, 36.

and love were accomplished; that grand display of the Divine hatred to sin, on which the universe was ever hereafter to gaze, had been made; and nothing remained to complete the work of atonement, but that the Redeemer should actually expire amidst that scene of sorrow and shame. When, therefore, He had received the vinegar, He said, "It is finished;" and adding, "Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit," He "bowed His head, and gave up the ghost."* And now the veil of the temple, which separated the holy of holies from the outer sanctuary, was rent in twain from the top to the bottom;† to indicate the passing away of the ceremonial economy, and the throwing open of the mercy-seat of God to every penitent worshipper, through the blood of the true Sacrifice.‡ Now, also, an earthquake rent the ground, and tore the rocks asunder, throwing open many of the graves to the view of men;§ and so affecting was the entire scene, that even the Roman centurion, who superintended the execution, and who well knew the lofty claim which Jesus had put forth, was constrained to say, "Truly this was a righteous man: truly this was the Son of God." Even the soldiers feared greatly, and joined in the acknowledgment of His claims; and all the people that had come together to that sight,—when the solemn tragedy had closed, and the Saviour's body hung lifeless on the tree,— "smote their breasts, and returned."||

The Sabbath was now drawing near; and in order

* John xix. 30; Luke xxiii. 46, Matthew xxvii. 50; Mark xv. 37.

† Matthew xxvii. 51; Mark xv. 38; Luke xxiii. 45.

‡ See Hebrews ix. 8; x. 19—22.

§ Matthew xxvii. 51, 52.

|| Matthew xxvii. 54; Mark xv. 39; Luke xxiii. 47, 48.

that the bodies should not remain upon the crosses on that holy day, the chief priests went to Pilate, and requested that the legs of the criminals might be broken, in order to expedite the process of dissolution, and that they might be taken away. Pilate complied with this request, and sent some soldiers to execute it. They accordingly broke the legs of the two thieves that were crucified with our Lord; but when they came to His body, they found that He was dead already, and forbore to inflict this indignity and violence upon Him. One of them, however, pierced His side with a spear; and immediately there issued from it blood and water.* Thus was the type of the paschal lamb, of which it was declared, “Neither shall ye break a bone thereof,” fulfilled in our Lord;† and thus, also, was a peculiar significance given to the prediction of Zechariah, “They shall look upon Me whom they have pierced.”‡

The tragedy of Calvary was now over;—the Redeemer had there endured His last agonies, and had expired as the Sacrifice for human guilt. And now, two of the most honourable members of the Jewish Sanhedrim, who had never consented to the malicious design formed against His life, came forward openly to testify their sincere regard to Him. One of these was Joseph, of Arimathæa, a rich man, distinguished by unaffected piety, and who had long been convinced secretly of the truth of the Saviour’s claims.§ The other was

* John xix. 31—35.

† Exodus xiii. 46; Numbers ix. 12; John xix. 36. See also the present work, Part I., Chapter III., page 45.

‡ Zechariah xii. 10.

§ Luke xxiii. 50, 51; John xix. 38; Matthew xxvii. 57; Mark xv. 43.

Nicodemus, who, when Jesus first visited Jerusalem as a public Teacher, came to Him by night, and to whom our Lord even then unfolded the necessity of His being lifted up on the cross, in order to the redemption of mankind.* Joseph went in boldly unto Pilate, and requested to have the body of Jesus given to him for interment. Pilate called the centurion, and asked, whether He was already dead; and, being satisfied on this point, directed the body to be delivered to him.† Having thus obtained the sanction of the Roman governor, Joseph hastened to the cross, with some fine linen which he had procured; and here he was joined by Nicodemus, who had provided a large quantity of spices, to do honour to the Saviour's remains. Carefully taking down the lifeless body from the cross, they wrapped it in the linen clothes, along with the spices, and committed it to Joseph's own new tomb, in which no human body had ever before been laid. This tomb was in a garden near to Calvary; it was hewn out of a rock; and Joseph and Nicodemus, having placed in it the sacred body of the Redeemer, rolled a great stone to the door of it, and departed.‡ Some of the affectionate group that had followed our Lord from Galilee lingered near the scene of His sufferings, until they beheld these offices of respect paid to His honoured remains. Two of them, in particular, Mary of Magdala, and Mary the mother of James and Joses, sat for a while over against the sepulchre.§ Then, returning to

* John xix. 39.

† Mark xv. 42—45; Luke xxiii. 52; Matthew xxvii. 58.

‡ John xix. 40—42; Matthew xxvii. 59, 60; Mark xv. 46; Luke xxiii. 53. Compare Isaiah liii. 9.

§ Matthew xxvii. 61; Mark xv. 47; Luke xxiii. 55.

the city, or, it may be, even to Bethany, they waited till the Sabbath should have passed, and the first day of the week should dawn, to embalm the crucified body of Jesus, and thus complete the funeral obsequies of One whom they had so sincerely revered and loved.*

CHAPTER XV.

THE RESURRECTION OF THE LORD JESUS, AND THE LAST FORTY DAYS SPENT BY HIM ON EARTH.

THE quiet of the Jewish Sabbath had now succeeded to the noise and tumult of the Redeemer's trial and crucifixion. The hill of Calvary was no longer covered with a mixed multitude, actuated by conflicting passions. The taunts of those who hated the Prophet of Galilee were hushed; and the deep sighs of those who loved Him were heard only in retirement and obscurity. The body of the distinguished Sufferer, hastily wrapped in grave-clothes with spices, now lay in the cold and silent tomb. Outwardly all was still; but the minds of men were deeply moved, nor could the impression of the scene that had transpired be effaced from the memory of any who had witnessed it.

To the chief priests and Pharisees that Sabbath was a time of guilty triumph, mixed with apprehension and alarm. They exulted in the accomplishment of their long-cherished purpose. They rejoiced that they had seen Him who had so often reproved their vices, and

* Luke xxiii. 56.

whose works of power had again and again confounded them, stretched upon the cross, and expiring there in deepest agony. It was to them a source of malignant satisfaction, that He who had assumed an unearthly dignity, affirming that He was even the Son of God, and that He should be revealed, at last, in all the majesty of the universal Judge,—had been consigned to the death of the vilest criminal. But, on the other hand, a feeling of solicitude arose within their breasts, when they reflected on the strange phenomena which had marked His last hours; and when they remembered that He Himself had predicted His own rejection and death, and had declared that on the third day He should rise again. To this day their anxiety was now directed. Should that declaration of Jesus be verified, all that they had done would only involve them in confusion and dismay; but if they could retain His body in its lifeless state until the third day should have passed, they would be able to exhibit to the whole nation the decisive proof of the fallacy of His claims, and to crush for ever the hopes of all who had revered and loved Him. To effect this important object, they applied to Pilate, even on the Sabbath, for a guard of soldiers to be stationed at the sepulchre. Their request was immediately complied with; and they went, accordingly, to the tomb of Jesus, and having seen the body still there in the coldness of death, they made the sepulchre sure, sealing the stone at its entrance, that no one might remove it without their being able to detect the fact, and setting a guard of Roman soldiers, to prevent the approach of any one whatever to invade its quiet.* Every human precaution

* Matthew xxvii. 62—66.

was thus taken to retain the body of Jesus in the tomb ; and this very arrangement was overruled by Divine Providence, to afford a strong and conclusive evidence of the reality of our Lord's resurrection.

The apostles were now timid, dejected, and sorrowful. The declarations which their Master had repeatedly uttered, relative to His approaching sufferings and death, but which they had ever been unwilling to receive in their natural and obvious meaning, had now been literally fulfilled ; and they had seen Him, in whose protection they had so long rejoiced, treated as a criminal and an outcast, and yielding Himself up to the most painful and ignominious death. They felt, that they were as sheep without a shepherd. The reality of the Saviour's separation from them distressed and overwhelmed them. The remembrance of their own ingratitude added to their sorrow. In the hour of His extremity, they had forsaken Him. The most zealous and enthusiastic of their number had even denied Him with oaths and curses. One apostle alone had stood beneath His cross, with the faithful group of Galilean women, that first looked on Him from afar, and then drew nearer and nearer to the scene of His last sufferings.* Self-reproach must have been mingled with the feeling of bereavement in the breasts of all the eleven, during that Sabbath in which the Redeemer's body lay in the silent sepulchre. The assurance which He had so often given them, that on the third day He would rise again, was not apprehended by them so as to bring hope and comfort to their minds.† Even the consolatory discourse

* Compare Mark xv. 40, 41, with John xix. 25, 26.

† John xx. 9 ; Luke xxiv. 11.

which He addressed to them, on the last evening before He suffered, seems to have faded from their memory, amidst the excitement and terror of the day that had just passed. They abandoned themselves to a feeling of desolation, blended at intervals with fears for their personal safety,* since they had every reason to expect that the relentless hostility which had pursued their Master, even unto death, would now be directed against *them*, as His constant companions and His chosen friends.

But the ardour and strength of female piety triumphed over every fear which the known enmity of the chief priests and rulers to the followers of Jesus could awaken. The affectionate group that had watched the Redeemer's final agonies, and had only been prevented by the arrival of the Sabbath from embalming His sacred body before it was committed to the sepulchre, had appointed to meet there, early on the morning of the first day of the week, and complete the obsequies of the Teacher whom they loved. Those of them who had lingered in the garden, where the sepulchre was, until it was too late to procure spices and ointments before the Sabbath began, did so as soon as the day of rest had expired, that everything might be ready, on the following morning, to execute their purpose.†

When the morning came,—as soon as the earliest dawn enabled them to proceed on their errand of duty and love,—these devoted and pious women set out, in two companies, for the sepulchre; having arranged, probably, to meet there about sunrise. Mary of Magdala, Salome, and Mary the mother of James and Joses, appear

* John xx. 19. † Mark xvi. 1, compared with Luke xxiii. 56.

to have been the first who drew near to the tomb.* They had observed, on the evening of the Redeemer's death, that Joseph of Arimathæa, and Nicodemus, had rolled a great stone to the door of the sepulchre; and they naturally asked each other, as they went, "Who shall roll us away the stone from the door of the sepulchre?"† Of the appointment of the guard they appear to have been ignorant; since this only took place on the evening of the Sabbath. But as they came nearer to the spot, and steadfastly looked towards it, they perceived that the stone which had caused their anxiety was rolled away.‡ Their first impression was, that the tomb had been despoiled of the body of their Lord, and that some additional indignities, even after death, had been cast upon it. With a mind full of astonishment and sorrow, Mary of Magdala appears to have left Salome and the other Mary, and to have hastened back to the city, or, it may be, even to Bethany, to apprise Peter and John of the remarkable fact. Her brief and earnest statement to them evinced the depth of her emotions:—"They have taken away the Lord out of the sepulchre, and we know not where they have laid Him."§ Her companions, meanwhile, went forward to the scene of wonder and awe; and there received the cheering tidings of the Saviour's resurrection. The Roman guard were yet about the sepulchre; but they were amazed and powerless. Scarcely had that day dawned, when a great earthquake was felt on the hill of Calvary, and an angel of God, descending from heaven, rolled back the stone from the door of the sepulchre, and sat upon it; and the

* Matthew xxviii. 1; Mark xvi. 1, 2; John xx. 1.

† Mark xvi. 3. ‡ Mark xvi. 4; John xx. 1. § John xx. 2.

Lord of life came forth from the silence of the tomb. In the presence of the heavenly messenger, who appeared as the servant of the crucified but now triumphant Jesus, the soldiers "became as dead men."^{*} Salome and Mary shared in their terror, as they beheld one sitting upon the stone in human form, but with his countenance like lightning, and his raiment white as snow. But he addressed them in terms of encouragement and comfort:—"Fear not ye: for I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified. He is not here: for He is risen, as He said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay."[†] Cheered and strengthened by these consolatory words, and anxious to see for themselves the vacant tomb, they entered it, as the angel invited them to do; and there they beheld another of the heavenly host, sitting on the right side, clothed in a long white garment, who also declared to them the resurrection of their Lord:—"Be not affrighted: Ye seek Jesus of Nazareth, which was crucified: He is risen; He is not here: behold the place where they laid Him. But go your way, tell His disciples and Peter that He goeth before you into Galilee: there shall ye see Him, as He said unto you."[‡] They obeyed this charge, and, leaving the sepulchre with mingled emotions of fear and joy, hastened to inform the disciples of the astonishing event, and to convey to Peter, in particular, the gracious message which had been sent to him.[§]

Almost immediately after they had left, some of the guard went into the city, to communicate to the chief

* Matthew xxviii. 2—4. † Matthew xxviii. 5, 6.

‡ Mark xvi. 5—7; Matthew xxviii. 7.

§ Mark xvi. 8; Matthew xxviii. 8.

priests, the intelligence of the resurrection of Him whom they had crucified. Without delay, they convened the council; and as the absence of the body, notwithstanding all the precautions they had taken to secure it, was of itself an evidence of the fact, they bribed the soldiers to make the incredible and ridiculous statement, "His disciples came by night, and stole Him away while we slept," assuring them, at the same time, that they would secure them from the displeasure of the governor.*

Meanwhile, the other party, of which Joanna, the wife of Chuza, Herod's steward, appears to have been the chief person, came to the sepulchre, and found to their surprise, that the stone, of which they too had thought with solicitude, was already rolled away.† Perceiving the tomb to be open, they entered it, and discovered that the body of Jesus was not there. They were astonished and perplexed; but the two angels who had so kindly addressed Salome and Mary, now announced to them, though in terms of gentle reproof, called forth by their want of faith in the Saviour's express prediction that He had indeed risen from the dead. "Why seek ye the living," they said, "among the dead? He is not here, but is risen: remember how He spake unto you when He was yet in Galilee, saying, The Son of man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again."‡ The declarations of the Redeemer now came to their minds with a force which they had never had before; and they too hastened from the sepulchre, to inform the eleven of

• Matthew xxviii. 11—15.

† Luke xxiv. 1, 2, compared with verse 10.

‡ Luke xxiv. 3—7.

the astonishing event, and to apprise all whom they had known to be sincerely attached to Him, that He was no longer held by the power of death.*

A comparison of the evangelical narratives shows us, that, soon after the departure of these pious females, Mary Magdalene returned with Peter and John to the sepulchre. In their eagerness to know the facts of the case, these apostles ran together towards the spot where the body of Jesus had been laid; but John outran Peter, and reached it first. Stooping down, he saw the linen clothes lying, but did not go into the sepulchre. Peter followed him, and went in, and observed, in particular, that the napkin which had been placed about the Redeemer's head was not lying with the linen clothes, but was wrapped together in a place by itself, so that everything within the tomb indicated calmness and composure, not haste and violence. John, also, then went into the sepulchre; and, having thus satisfied themselves that the remains of their Master were no longer there, they returned, meditating with astonishment and awe on the remarkable event.†

The affectionate Mary of Magdala still lingered weeping at the sepulchre. To her the mysterious fact was yet unexplained. She only knew, that the body of her Lord was not reposing in its allotted resting-place; and she feared that it had been treated with unseemly violence. The cheering tidings of His resurrection, which the angels had conveyed to her companions, during her absence to call Peter and John, had not yet reached her ears: but now, "as she wept, she stooped down, and looked into the sepulchre, and saw two

* Luke xxiv. 8, 9, 11.

† John xx. 3—10.

angels in white sitting, the one at the head, and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain.” These heralds of her Lord addressed her, “Woman, why weepest thou?” She replied, with beautiful simplicity, “Because they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid Him.” Then, turning herself back, she observed a person standing near, who accosted her in similar language: “Woman, why weepest thou? whom seekest thou?” Her first impression was, that this must be the keeper of the garden; and she said to him, with the earnestness of deep affection and solicitude, “Sir, if thou have borne Him hence, tell me where thou hast laid Him, and I will take Him away.” But the person who stood before her was her honoured Lord Himself; and, with His own peculiar accent of benignity and grace, He said to her, “Mary!” She gazed upon Him, recognising His well-known voice, and with a full heart exclaimed, “Rabboni,”—“My Master.”* She was about to embrace His feet: but the Saviour directed her not now to do so, as other opportunities of seeing Him would be afforded to her; but to go to His apostles, whom He still condescended to call His “brethren,” and to say unto them, “I ascend unto My Father, and your Father; and to My God, and your God.”†

This was the first appearance of our Lord after His resurrection from the dead. It was vouchsafed to Mary, as the reward of her surpassing affection, and to impart comfort to her troubled mind. Her grateful love to the Saviour would not permit her to leave the spot where His sacred body had been laid, uncertain what had become of it, and fearful that it had been removed

* John xx. 11—16; Mark xvi. 9.

† John xx. 17.

by an unfriendly hand. Jesus Himself assured her, that He had risen to a new and glorious life. He dried her tears, by revealing Himself to her in all the benignity and tenderness which had ever marked His addresses to the humble and devout. The first recorded words which He uttered, after He rose from the tomb, were intended to dispel the gloom of one who loved Him, and to pour consolation into an anxious and sorrowful spirit.

About the time when the fact of the Saviour's resurrection had been generally reported to His followers in the city, but when no one had yet arrived who had actually seen Him, Cleopas and another disciple left Jerusalem for Emmaus, a village rather more than seven miles distant. As they walked along, they conversed respecting the astonishing and mournful events of the last few days. A Stranger "drew near, and went with them." He inquired the subject of their discourse, and the cause of that sorrow and dejection which were visible in their appearance and manner. Cleopas, in reply, expressed his surprise, that any one who had been staying in Jerusalem or its neighbourhood, during the last few days, could be ignorant of the affecting events which had transpired. The Stranger asked, to what events he referred; and then Cleopas avowed the profound regard which he and his companion had felt for Jesus of Nazareth, whose teaching and miracles proved Him to be an illustrious Prophet, and of whom they had hoped, that He was indeed the promised Redeemer; but now they had seen Him condemned to death, and extended as an outcast upon the cross. And yet, on that day,—the third since the tragedy of Calvary,—their astonishment had been awakened by the report of some pious

women of their company, who, having been early at the sepulchre, had not found His body, and who stated that "they had also seen a vision of angels, who said that He was alive." The fact of the absence of the body they regarded as established by the additional testimony of some of their fellow-disciples, who went to inquire into its truth; and yet none of them had seen the Saviour Himself, since He had come forth—if it were really so—from the silence and darkness of the tomb.* Such was the statement of Cleopas; and it clearly shows the conflict of thought and feeling which had place in many minds on that critical and eventful day. The shame and suffering of the cross had nearly extinguished their confidence in the power of Jesus; and, not understanding that His death and resurrection were both essential to the accomplishment of the Divine purposes, they thought of Him as their crucified Friend and Master, with unaffected sorrow, and scarcely dared to hope that He would revisit our world, and open new scenes of glory to His humble and devout people. But the Stranger now interposed, to correct their low and earthly views of the Messiah's work, and to unfold to them the deep meaning of the ancient prophecies relative to His sufferings and triumphs. He began with the expostulation, "O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Ought not the Messiah to have suffered these things, and to enter into His glory?" Then, leading them through all the Scriptures of the Old Testament, He showed them the numerous intimations which had been given both of the Messiah's rejection and death, and of His subsequent exaltation and glory.† Just as

* Luke xxiv. 13—24.

† Luke xxiv. 25—27.

He completed this elaborate exposition of the Messianic prophecies and types, they drew nigh to Emmaus; but He seemed as if He would protract the journey. The two disciples, however, whose profound interest had been awakened by His conversation, though as yet they did not recognise in Him their honoured Lord, urged Him to stay with them at Emmaus. He yielded to their importunity; and as He sat at table with them, “He took bread, and blessed it, and broke, and gave to them:” and in this act, the truth flashed on their minds, that He with whom they had conversed, and to whose exposition of the Scriptures they had listened with astonishment and delight, was indeed the risen Saviour Himself.* When they left Jerusalem, they had no expectation of again seeing Him on earth; and, up to this moment, a peculiar influence seems to have kept them from knowing Him, that a calm and argumentative appeal might be made to their judgment, in relation to the testimony of the ancient Scriptures concerning the Messiah’s death and resurrection.† But now He stood revealed in all the tenderness and grace of His former intercourse with them, as well as in the peculiar authority which He had ever claimed, and the fulness of wisdom which had ever distinguished His discourses. Holy joy and gratitude filled their breasts: but the Redeemer tarried not with them, to gratify their affection, or contribute further to their instruction. Other visits of mercy were before Him; and, ere that eventful day closed, the bleeding heart of Peter was to be assured of the removal of its guilt, and the assembled company of the apostles was to be favoured with a decisive proof

* Luke xxiv. 28—31.

† Luke xxiv. 16.

of the reality of His resurrection. As soon as they recognised Him, the Saviour left them; and they, astonished and delighted, said one to another, "Did not our heart burn within us, while He talked with us by the way, and while He opened to us the Scriptures?" Then, leaving Emmaus, they hastily returned to Jerusalem, to communicate to their companions and friends the delightful fact, that Jesus had indeed risen from the dead, and that they had seen Him, and had conversed and eaten with Him.*

But ere they arrived in the city, the affecting interview of our Lord with Peter had taken place, and had been made known to most of the apostles.† The particulars of that interview are not recorded. Deep and intense must have been the emotions of Peter, when, alone with his Master, he acknowledged the guilt of his unfaithfulness, and sought the forgiveness of his sin. The compassionate Redeemer loved His fallen, but not treacherous, disciple. He who never "broke a bruised reed," nor "quenched the smoking flax," doubtless uttered words of comfort and peace to one who sincerely loved Him, and who had now learned, by bitter experience, the feebleness of his own resolves, and his need of constant succour from above.

In the evening of that day, the eleven, with the exception of Thomas, were gathered together in Jerusalem. They were now assured, both by the acknowledged fact of the absence of the body from the sepulchre, though guarded by Roman soldiers, and by the explicit testimonies of Mary Magdalene and Simon Peter, that their adorable Lord had risen from the dead. The gloom

* Luke xxiv. 31—33.

† Luke xxiv. 34; 1 Corinthians xv. 5.

which had enveloped their minds was to a great extent dispelled; and their cheerful language was, "The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared to Simon." Still they remembered that they were exposed to the hatred of the chief priests and Pharisees; and they accordingly secured the doors of the room in which they were assembled, lest any attempt should be made to apprehend them.* Cleopas and his companion had now arrived, and had related their memorable interview with the risen Saviour, when He Himself stood in the midst of them, and in His own gracious manner said to them, "Peace be unto you." At first they were greatly alarmed at His sudden appearance, supposing that they beheld a spirit from the invisible world. But He calmed their agitation by the affectionate appeal, "Why are ye troubled? and why do thoughts arise in your hearts? Behold My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself: handle Me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see Me have." Then, with great condescension and kindness, He showed them His hands and His feet, still bearing the marks of the nails with which they had been fastened to the cross.† Their emotions of surprise and joy were almost overwhelming; but the Saviour proceeded to give them yet another proof of the reality of His resurrection. He said to them, "Have ye here any food?" They "gave Him a piece of a broiled fish, and of an honeycomb. And He took it, and did eat before them."‡ Then, ere He left them, He repeated His benediction, "Peace be unto

* Luke xxiv. 33, 34, compared with John xx. 19—24.

† Luke xxiv. 35—40; John xx. 19, 20.

‡ Luke xxiv. 41—43.

you,"—constituted them the authoritative teachers of His religion, and the guides and rulers of His church,—and assured them of the gift of the Holy Spirit to qualify them for their high and peculiar functions. Though He was about to continue on earth for forty days, His work as a public Teacher had terminated; and it was His design, that His apostles, when they had received the baptism of the Holy Ghost, should go forth in His name, to proclaim the message of repentance and faith in Himself, and authoritatively to declare to men the terms of their acceptance, and the rule of their duty.*

One of the eleven—Thomas, called Didymus—was absent from his brethren on this memorable occasion. They embraced the first opportunity of conveying to him the joyful intelligence, that they had seen the Lord. But he remained incredulous; and even went so far as to say, "Except I shall see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into His side, I will not believe."† A week was suffered to elapse before this culpable want of confidence both in the predictions of his Master, and the consistent testimony of his brethren, was removed; and, during this period, his mind must have been the subject of painful conflict and suspense. But on the next Christian Sabbath, when the disciples were again assembled, and Thomas with them, the Saviour condescended to visit them again: and having saluted them in the usual manner, but with words which from His lips had a peculiar significance,— "Peace be unto you,"—He said to Thomas, "Reach

* John xx. 21—23.

† John xx. 24, 25.

hither thy finger, and behold My hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into My side: and be not faithless, but believing." Here was a convincing proof, not only of His resurrection from the dead, but of His knowledge of the thoughts of men, and of their words, though uttered in His absence. The unbelief of Thomas was instantly overcome; and, remembering the evidences of Divinity which had appeared in his Master's whole career, he exclaimed, "My Lord and my God!" The Saviour accepted this acknowledgment of His glory; but admonished His disciple of the higher blessedness of a more simple and child-like faith:—"Thomas, because thou hast seen Me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed."*

Soon after this the eleven departed to Galilee, being directed to do so by a message from the Redeemer. Here He manifested Himself to several of them, on the shore of the lake of Galilee. After spending a night in fishing on that lake without success, they obtained, by following the direction of Jesus, who in the morning stood on the shore, a large draught; and He condescended to partake with them of the food which His kindness had provided. His conduct, on this occasion, evinced His interest in the temporal wants of His people, while it afforded a proof of His true and proper manhood. But this interview was chiefly remarkable for the conversation which passed between the risen Saviour and Peter. In the presence of six of his brethren, our Lord said to that disciple, "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou Me more than these?" The affectionate heart of Peter at once responded to this inquiry. Taught by his recent

* John xx. 26—29.

fall to distrust his own strength, he did not now venture upon a bold declaration of surpassing attachment, but appealed to our Lord Himself, as to the sincerity of his regard. The Saviour thrice repeated the inquiry; and receiving, in every instance, a firm and decided avowal of Peter's love, He graciously accepted that avowal,—charged him to feed His lambs and His sheep,—and carried forward his views to the painful and ignominious death by which he should at last glorify God. But when Peter presumed to ask, what would be the circumstances of the death of John, our Lord repressed his curiosity, and taught him, that his one business was to “follow” Him, until, having suffered with Him on earth, he should rise at last to participate in His triumph, and to share His joy.*

But the departure of the eleven to Galilee was arranged with an express reference to our Lord's public and formal manifestation of Himself, after His resurrection, in that district, which had formed the principal scene of His labours.† The Saviour had Himself spoken of this manifestation, in His last conversation with His apostles, on the evening before He suffered;‡ and the angels who announced His resurrection to the women, on the morning of the day which witnessed His triumph over death, instructed them to say to His disciples, “Behold, He goeth before you into Galilee; there shall ye see Him.”§ Everything conspired to invest *this* appearance of our Lord with solemnity and importance. The attention, not of the eleven only, but of many of

* John xxi. 1—24.

† Matthew xxviii. 16.

‡ Matthew xxvi. 32; Mark xiv. 28.

§ Matthew xxviii. 7; Mark xvi. 7.

His devout followers, seems to have been directed to it, as that which should form the crowning evidence of His resurrection, and fully establish the truth of all His claims. It was on this occasion that He was "seen of above five hundred brethren at once," to the greater part of whom St. Paul refers as still alive, when he wrote his first Epistle to the Corinthians.* And it was on this occasion that our Lord gave to His apostles, in the presence of His assembled followers, their high commission. He "came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world."† In these emphatic words the Redeemer set forth His own mediatorial authority and dominion;—He appointed baptism as the mode of admitting men to the profession of discipleship to Himself;—He declared the profound mystery of the Trinity in Unity, and shed a degree of light on His own essential glory as the Son, united with the Father and the Holy Spirit in that one "Name," before which every creature is to bow with reverence and love;—He affirmed that His revealed will is to be in all ages the law of His church;—and He assured His apostles, and His faithful ministers in every period of the world's history, that He would be with them, to succour them in every conflict, to sustain them under every trial, to fill their minds with heavenly consolation and peace, and to crown with success their arduous enterprise. Many who witnessed this impressive

* 1 Corinthians xv. 6.

† Matthew xxviii. 18—20.

scene, “worshipped” the risen Saviour; nor did He repel this homage, dictated by a lively faith, and a sincere and fervent love.*

Soon after this, our Lord favoured James with a special manifestation of Himself.† The particulars of this interview have not been given to us; and it would be vain to hazard conjectures respecting its design. It is sufficient for us to know, that every part of our Lord’s conduct had the highest reasons; although those reasons may not, in every case, be obvious to us. Some have thought, that through this apostle a message was sent to the eleven, to return to Jerusalem, and prepare for the final removal of their beloved Master from their sight. The fact itself, that they did return to that metropolis, is certain; and it is highly probable that they did so in obedience to the express instructions of the Saviour. For now the time was drawing near when He should leave this world, and ascend to the throne of His glory. The great purposes of His appearance on earth were accomplished. He had shed the light of heavenly truth upon the minds of men;—He had endured the deep humiliation and anguish which were appointed to Him as the Substitute of our guilty race;—He had offered up Himself as a perfect and spotless Victim;—and He had risen from the dead, to diffuse gladness over our redeemed world, and give the assurance of eternal life to all who should trust in Him. By His intercourse with His apostles since His resurrection, He had established the certainty of that great event;—He had restored their confidence and peace, after the gloom and terror which had come over them;—He had given

* Matthew xxviii. 17.

† 1 Corinthians xv. 7.

them their full commission, as His ambassadors to the world;—and He had instructed them in the duties which would devolve upon them,—duties, for the faithful discharge of which they were to be qualified by the promised Spirit of truth. Nothing now remained, but that He should address to them His last words of admonition, encouragement, and blessing, and ascend, in their presence, to His Father's throne. Assembled with them in Jerusalem, He commanded them not to leave that city until “the promise of the Father” should be fulfilled, and they should be “endued with power from on high,” by the descent of the Holy Ghost.* He reminded them, that their great business was to announce to mankind His death and resurrection, and, through His name, to proclaim repentance and remission of sins; and He charged them to enter upon their high and holy mission in Jerusalem itself.† Repressing every feeling of vain curiosity as to the plans of God for the future, He admonished them to apply themselves to their proper work of bearing testimony to Him;‡ and then He led them out as far as Bethany, and lifted up His hands and blessed them,—and while He blessed them, He was parted from them, and received up into heaven.§ They gazed upon Him as He ascended, until “a cloud received Him out of their sight;” and then returned to Jerusalem, not overwhelmed with sorrow, but triumphing in this last display of their Master’s dignity, and waiting with sacred hope for the promised gift of the Holy Ghost, to qualify them for their embassy of grace and peace.||

* Luke xxiv. 49; Acts i. 4, 5. † Luke xxiv. 44—48.

‡ Acts i. 6—8. § Luke xxiv. 50, 51; Acts i. 9; Mark xvi. 19.

|| Luke xxiv. 52, 53.

PART III.

CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS ON THE
MEDIATORIAL ECONOMY.



CHAPTER I.

REVIEW OF THE REDEEMER'S LIFE, AND SUFFERINGS, AND DEATH, IN THEIR RELATION TO THE DIVINE GOVERNMENT OF OUR WORLD, AND TO THE SALVATION OF MAN.

WE have now reached a point in the mediatorial undertaking of the Son of God, from which we may properly survey its bearing on the principles and arrangements of the Divine government. We have contemplated the appearance on earth of the Deliverer, to whom human expectation had been directed from the period of the fall. We have traced the events for which so elaborate a series of preparations, extending through many ages, had been made; and to which the angelic hosts had looked forward with deep and constant interest. We have seen, that when "the fulness of time" arrived, the Eternal Son clothed Himself with our nature, and appeared among us, a sharer of our weakness, our temptations, and our sorrows.* We have marked the mysterious union of lowness and majesty which distinguished His entire career. We have viewed Him as the babe of Bethlehem,—the obscure inhabitant of Nazareth,—the illustrious Prophet, whose teaching shed a flood of light on religious truth,—and the Divine Restorer, from whose touch pain and sickness fled, and

* Galatians iv. 4, 5; Hebrews ii. 14—18.

to whose will universal nature bowed. In the development of His character we have beheld an attractive gentleness and condescension, blended with an ineffable dignity, and a purity which shrunk back from all moral contamination. We have followed Him through the three years of His ministry, until He came up, for the last time, to Jerusalem, to suffer and die. We have listened to His public discourses, and to His admonitory and affectionate addresses to the disciples whom He chose to be the companions of His labours, and the witnesses of His sufferings to mankind. We have seen Him oppressed with mental anguish, amidst the solitudes of Gethsemane; and we have traced the rude indignities which were heaped upon Him, until at length He was extended upon the cross, and died as the Sacrifice for human guilt. We have contemplated His resurrection from the dead, together with the numerous and convincing proofs of that great event; and we have rejoiced to behold Him, after His deep humiliation, released from the burden which before pressed upon His pure and benevolent mind, but retaining all the tenderness and sympathy which had ever marked His intercourse with His followers. We have listened to His last charge to His apostles, and have seen Him taken from their head while in the very act of blessing them, to be enthroned at the right hand of the Eternal Father, and to sway a sceptre of righteousness and grace, until His enemies shall be made His footstool.*

In the history of the Redeemer which we have thus traced, the greatest prominence must ever be given to *His sacrificial DEATH*. The incarnation of the Son of

* Psalm cx. 1; Hebrews i. 1—3.

God, and all the events of His life on earth, were preparatory to the offering up of Himself as an atonement for the sins of men. It was "for the suffering of death," that He who had dwelt with the Father in the glories of eternity, "took upon Him the form of a servant," and appeared on earth, divested of external grandeur, and revealing His inherent dignity only in the purity and goodness of His character, and the majesty of His works of power.* He Himself looked forward, with profound interest, to that period of anguish through which He had to pass to accomplish the work of our redemption; and it was when He bowed His head on the cross, and exclaimed, "It is finished," that He was "made perfect" as "the Captain of our salvation."†

It becomes us, therefore, to take our stand at the foot of the cross, that we may learn the lessons which that solemn spectacle is designed to teach. The scene of Calvary was intended to present to the universe an affecting display of the essential righteousness of God, blended with His tender and condescending love to man. The sufferings which came upon the Redeemer, though Himself pure and spotless, and uniting in His mysterious person the Divine and human natures, were endured by Him as the Substitute of our guilty race;‡ and their very intensity illustrates the displeasure of God against sin, and His inviolable adherence to all the principles of His government.

It is not for us to penetrate into the deep sorrows of the Redeemer's spirit, when that "hour" arrived, of which He had so often spoken with peculiar emotions.

* Hebrews ii. 9, collated with Philippians ii. 5—8; John i. 14.

† Hebrews ii. 10. ‡ Romans v. 6—8; 1 Peter iii. 18.

It is enough for us to know, that in the garden, and upon the cross, He endured that “travail of soul” which the intimations of prophecy had ascribed to the great Deliverer.* It was an anguish, deep, intense, unutterable; and to that anguish we must add the exquisite pain of body which He felt, as He hung on the accursed tree, and the ignominy which was heaped upon Him, until at length He yielded up His spirit. As we behold Him thus becoming “obedient unto death, even the death of the cross,” we are reminded of the emphatic declarations of the apostle Paul:—“God hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.”† “Him hath God set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood, to declare His righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; even to declare at this time His righteousness, that He might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.”‡

Such, then, is the arrangement of God for the recovery and salvation of man: and with reverence we may say, that this arrangement is in every respect *worthy* of Him. It affords the most affecting views of all His attributes; and conveys to every thoughtful mind the most salutary lessons. Nor is the interest of this arrangement confined to the human race: the principles which it involves affect other orders of rational beings, and even the angelic hosts desire to look into its mysteries, and gaze on the atoning Saviour, to derive instruction from the contemplation of His sorrows.§ While we would not

* Isaiah liii. 11. † 2 Corinthians v. 21. ‡ Romans iii. 24—26.

§ 1 Peter i. 11, 12; 1 Timothy iii. 16.

presumptuously speculate on the fitness of the plans of God, but would humbly follow the teaching of His own word, assured that all His ways are right and good,—we may yet boldly and gratefully affirm with the apostle, “It became Him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings.”*

It is an obvious consideration, that it became the Most High, in interposing to save man, *to do so in a manner which would convey to all His creatures just conceptions of His own character.*—The character of God is an object of interest to the universe. The affections which bind His intelligent offspring to Him have some correspondence to the views which they form of it. The beautiful system of nature, and the entire course of providence, tend to develop and unfold it. Much more, then, was it suited to the Divine wisdom, that so peculiar a procedure as the redemption of a sinful race should place every attribute of that character in a clear and impressive light. And so it is. As we stand beneath the cross, and look upon the august Sufferer, and think of the deep anguish of His spirit, we behold an impressive display of the *holiness* and *justice* of God.† Here is an affecting proof, that, under the Divine government, sin cannot be treated as a light or trivial thing. Had man been pardoned by an act of mere prerogative, then might the suspicion have been awakened, that sin does not, after all, call forth intense displeasure in the mind of God, and that it may even be connived at by Him. But now every such idea is shut out; and no man who

* Hebrews ii. 10.

† Romans iii. 25, 26.

contemplates the dying Saviour can retire from that sight without feeling that sin is regarded by the Most High as infinitely vile and base, and that under His administration it must be visited with suffering. When we reflect, further, on the person of the Redeemer, and remember that He was the only-begotten Son manifested in our nature, we feel that the scenes of Calvary illustrate *the love of God to man*. He who was one with the Father before any creature was formed, and who was unspeakably dear to Him while He tabernacled upon earth, became the Sacrifice for human guilt. "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins."*

There is another aspect under which the sacrificial death of the Lord Jesus should be regarded, in our attempt reverently to trace the wisdom and excellence of the Divine plans. While that great event sheds light on the character of God, it is designed also to exert an important influence on the sentiments and feelings of man. It was eminently worthy of the Most High, as the Creator and Lord of the Universe, *to make the very means of our reconciliation to Himself the means of calling forth within our breasts a profound hatred to sin, and an intense desire of holiness*. Such a state of mind the scenes of Gethsemane and Calvary are calculated to produce and sustain. That man who, under the burden of his guilt, flies to the Lord Jesus Christ as the only Saviour,—who, with humble faith, gazes upon Him in the deep agony of spirit which He endured, and who follows Him even to the cross, there to behold Him made a sin-offering for us,—cannot trifle with any

* 1 John iv. 10. See also John iii. 16; Romans viii. 32.

form of iniquity, or wish to retain that which was the cause of exquisite sorrow to His pure and benignant mind. The heart that really trusts in Christ, and surrenders its affections to Him, cannot but turn away from sin as that which He regards with intense displeasure, and which brought upon Him an unutterable anguish, when He took the place of the guilty. The death of the Lord Jesus Christ, therefore, while it opens to us the path of life consistently with every perfection of the Divine character, and every principle of the Divine government, directly tends to restore us to universal holiness, and to reunite us, in sentiment and feeling, to the angelic hosts, who esteem it their highest happiness and joy to do the will of God.*

These considerations may suffice to illustrate the profound wisdom of the plan of human redemption, by the sufferings and death of the incarnate Son of God. But while we reverently engage in such inquiries, we cannot but feel, that it is more suited to the position which we occupy, as the subjects of the Divine government, to contemplate the sacrifice of the cross, in the light which it sheds on *the actual state of our race*, and then to trace *the method of salvation* which it opens to us.

When from beneath the cross we look round upon our world, the first reflection which forces itself on our minds is, that the state of mankind must be one of *guilt* and *ruin*, or such a Sacrifice would not have been provided. This was a sentiment on which the apostle Paul was accustomed to dwell, and by which he was urged onward in his career of evangelical toil. "The

* Romans viii. 3, 4; Ephesians i. 9, 10.

love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that *if One died for all, then were all dead.*"* The utter sinfulness of man, and his exposure to eternal woe, are truths which lie at the basis of that plan of recovery, of which the incarnation of the Son, and His vicarious death, are the leading facts. Nor can any one appreciate the Redeemer as he should do, or come to Him for salvation and life, until he feels that, without Him, he is utterly undone and lost.

It is a solemn fact, that we are all involved in the results of the first transgression. The ravages of disease and death, extending even to those who have not passed the tender years of infancy, are a convincing proof of this. And our relation to Adam has affected our moral state. Our *natural* condition is one of *guilt* and *pollution*. The race of man is under the displeasure of God, and severed in heart from Him. "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." "By the offence of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation." "By one man's disobedience many were made sinners."† Sin, also, has pervaded our lives, and vitiated our best and fairest actions. The burden of accumulated transgressions rests upon every soul that has not fled for refuge to the Saviour, and obtained forgiveness and peace through Him.‡

Every thoughtful man must plead guilty to the charge of sinfulness before God, when he seriously inquires into his own character and state, and places not his actions

* 2 Corinthians v. 14.

† See the entire argument of St. Paul, in Romans v. 12—21.

‡ Romans iii. 19, 23; John iii. 36.

only, but his principles and motives, in the light of God's holy and spiritual law. That law requires, that the Most High Himself should be the object of our supreme regard,—that to Him our hearts should turn with grateful love, blended with lowly reverence and profound submission,—and that we should at all times seek His glory, and aim to do His will.* Communion with Him should be viewed by us as the most ennobling and delightful exercise; and His character should ever be esteemed as the pattern of moral loveliness. But the human heart is naturally estranged from God. It seeks rather to forget Him, than to maintain a reference to Him in every engagement and relation of life. The consciousness of entire dependence upon Him is unwelcome and painful. The remembrance of His righteous administration is alarming. The thought of His unsullied purity is repulsive. If the tendencies of our nature are allowed to develop themselves without restraint, and that gracious influence of the Spirit which would produce repentance is checked and resisted, we seek to be as gods to ourselves,—dwelling with fond complacency on our own excellencies, making our own judgment the standard of rectitude, and seeking our own glory and enjoyment as the end of existence. *Self* is the idol which is enthroned in our hearts, and to which the sweetest incense is offered. There is thus a fearful schism between us and God. We are “alienated and enemies” to Him “in our minds by wicked works.”† “The carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.”‡ And

* Matthew xxii. 37; Mark xii. 29, 30; 1 Corinthians x. 31.

† Colossians i. 21. ‡ Romans viii. 7.

this charge of estrangement from the Most High, is one which may be justly alleged against *every man* who has not yielded to the softening influences of the Spirit, and embraced the overtures of mercy. There are many whose conduct towards others is upright and honourable, and whose character presents some amiable and attractive features, who are yet wanting in this first principle of holiness,—*the devotion of the heart to God*. And the absence of this vitiates all that appears excellent and lovely. It is *base* to forget God, to regard Him with aversion, or not to respond to His demand of supreme and constant love.

But, indeed, this alienation of the affections from God naturally tends to produce a disordered state of mind towards our fellow-men. The outward manifestations of depravity may be restrained by the influence of education, or a regard to worldly considerations; but even when all is right without, the heart is often the seat of impure and hurtful passions. If love to God, and reverence for His authority, are not the commanding principles of our minds, we shall find it difficult to maintain a strict regard to all the rights of others, when those rights would interfere with our own interests. Still more difficult shall we find it, to forgive an affront or injury, and to check the first movements of envy towards those whose circumstances are more favourable than our own, or whose success has involved us in disappointment and sorrow.

Those requirements of the Divine law to which we have adverted may, at the first view, appear strict and even repulsive. But they are right, benevolent, and lovely. They commend themselves, upon mature reflec-

tion, to the approval and esteem of every enlightened and spiritual mind. It is a beautiful and impressive declaration of St. Paul, that "the law is holy, and just, and good."* It frowns upon everything that is impure and contaminating, in feeling or conduct; it asserts the rights of God as to us, His creatures and subjects; it guards our rights as to each other; and even its strictest demands tend to promote the happiness of the mind that reveres and obeys them. Were the principles enjoined in the Divine law cherished by every human mind, and developed in all the intercourse of society, this earth would again be changed to paradise, and present an attractive spectacle of peace, and love, and joy. But *we* have broken this holy law. There is no one who can stand forth in the presence of Jehovah, and affirm that he has never sinned. There is no one who can plead, that his heart, throughout life, has been right with God, and fully devoted to His service. "By the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in His sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin."† The proper attitude of the human spirit before God is that of lowly and penitent confession. The prayer which each of us should breathe forth is that of the publican, "God be merciful to me a sinner."‡

But to the mind thus awakened and contrite, the mediatorial economy opens a new method of **JUSTIFICATION**. All hope in ourselves is cut off, that we may fly to Christ the appointed Refuge of the guilty, and receive through Him forgiveness and peace.§ We are to be "justified freely by the grace of God," without any

* Romans vii. 12. † Romans iii. 20. ‡ Luke xviii. 13.
§ Galatians iii. 22.

merit of our own, and simply through the exercise of *faith* in that blood which has been shed for our redemption.* Not only is every plea of personal righteousness to be cast aside, but even our repentance—though necessary to lead us to the Saviour—is not to be relied on as making us worthy of the Divine favour. We must seek forgiveness as the *unmerited gift* of God through Jesus Christ; and, taking our place before the mercy-seat as guilty and undone, we must look to Him who bore our curse, and plead with humble confidence, “The Son of God loved me, and gave Himself for me.” We must commit our souls to the infinite merit of the Redeemer’s sacrifice; we must embrace Him as “the Lord our righteousness;” and when thus, with the heart, we believe on Him, God will not impute to us our iniquities, but will “accept” us in Christ, and love us as His children.†

This dependence on the Saviour becomes the fixed and settled *habit* of the mind, when reconciled to God, and blessed with the fulness of spiritual life. The believer’s state is ever represented as a being “*in Christ*.”‡ The faith through which we are justified brings us near to Him; it *unites* us indeed to Him, as the Head of His spiritual church; and it is only while we “abide” in Him, that we can retain our peace, or pursue a course of evangelical obedience. “Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in Me. I am the vine, ye are the branches. He that abideth in Me, and I

* Romans iii. 24—26; Galatians ii. 15, 16.

† Galatians ii. 20, 21; Jeremiah xxiii. 6; Romans iv. 6—8; 2 Corinthians v. 21; Ephesians i. 5—7.

‡ Romans viii. 1; 2 Corinthians v. 17; Philippians iii. 9.

in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without Me ye can do nothing.”* Trust in the atonement is to be blended with all our acts of worship,—all our emotions towards the Father,—and all our active services to Him. “I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by Me.”† “Through Him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father.”‡ As we advance in Christian experience, the conviction of dependence on the Lord Jesus becomes deeper and yet deeper. Every established Christian can gratefully adopt the language of the apostle Paul, “I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me. I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain.”§

But this view of the believer’s state, as one of spiritual life derived from union with Christ, leads us to consider more distinctly the provision which has been made, through our Lord’s atonement, for the **SANCTIFICATION** of our nature. It was the design of the Eternal Father, in giving His Son to become our Substitute and Sacrifice, to restore us to holiness, and enable us to yield a cheerful and constant obedience to His will. “For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.”||

* John xv. 4, 5. † John xiv. 6. ‡ Ephesians ii. 18.

§ Galatians ii. 20, 21. || Romans viii. 3, 4.

We have already seen that the deep anguish which filled the Redeemer's spirit in Gethsemane and on Calvary, while it evinced the displeasure of God against sin, was intended to call forth within our minds a profound hatred to all iniquity. The light which is reflected from the cross, places the vileness of sin in new and affecting aspects; and no one who feels its influence upon his spirit, can trifle with any form of transgression. But it is in *the gift of the Holy Spirit* that we see the grand provision for our actual consecration to God. In honour of the perfect sacrifice of the Lord Jesus, now presented by Himself before the throne of the Majesty on high, the Spirit is sent down in all the fulness of His gracious power. He visits the mind while yet in darkness and spiritual death. He applies "the truth as it is in Jesus," to awaken religious emotion, and to call forth desire and effort.* He melts the heart that yields to that truth, into all the tenderness of evangelical repentance. He leads the contrite spirit to the cross; and enables it, with appropriating faith, to look to Him who there bore the iniquities of our race.† To the believing mind He imparts comfort, and purity, and strength. He attests our adoption into the family of God, and sweetly prompts the cry, "Abba, Father."‡ He breathes a living energy into our souls. He leads us forth from a state of captivity to sin; and, constituting us truly free, enables us to devote our affections and our powers to God. "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For the law of the

* John xvi. 7—9. † Ephesians ii. 8; John vi. 44, 45.

‡ Romans viii. 15, 16; Galatians iv. 4—6.

Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.”* He gives to us, within our own breasts, the pledge and earnest of eternal life. He “seals” us as the people of God, and the heirs of that inheritance upon which the Saviour has entered, and which His saints are to share with Him for ever.†

The gift of the Spirit as the Comforter and the Sanctifier, is the *great* promise of the evangelical dispensation. His richest influences were reserved to honour the economy which should be established, when the incarnate Son should have accomplished the work of atonement, and ascended to the throne of His glory.‡ Everything conspires to show, that it is through Christ that the Spirit is given to man; and thus, that not our pardon only, but our inward life, and purity, and strength, are all to be ascribed to the sufferings of the cross. “Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree: that the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.”§ “But of Him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: that, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.”||

The atonement of the Lord Jesus, therefore, while it sheds light on the attributes of the Divine character, and upholds the principles of the Divine government, is

* Romans viii. 1, 2. See also Romans vi. 22.

† 2 Corinthians i. 21, 22; v. 5; Ephesians i. 13, 14; Romans viii. 9—17.

‡ John vii. 39; xvi. 7.

§ Galatians iii. 13, 14.

|| 1 Corinthians i. 30, 31.

the source of the richest blessings to every humble believer. And that atonement places us under a solemn obligation *to devote ourselves to the Saviour.* The anguish which He endured for us, viewed in connexion with the mysterious dignity of His person, gives Him a claim to our supreme love and our profound submission. In coming to Him for salvation, and embracing Him in all the fulness of His grace, we are to *resign* ourselves to Him, so as henceforth to seek His glory, and do His will. “The love of Christ constraineth us, because we thus judge, that if One died for all, then were all dead: and that He died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him which died for them, and rose again.”* The Redeemer demands of all who trust in Him, that they should place themselves under His rule, and dedicate themselves to His service. He seeks to encircle Himself with a holy people, rejoicing in the benefits which He bestows, and esteeming life as valuable, chiefly because it can be used for His glory. “He gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.”† Oh that all the nations of the earth were thus brought to trust in the incarnate Son,—to reflect His image,—and to engage in His service! Then, in its widest extent, would the declaration of the evangelical prophet be fulfilled:—“He shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied: by His knowledge shall My righteous Servant justify many; for He shall bear their iniquities.”‡

* 2 Corinthians v. 14, 15. † Titus ii. 14. See also Psalm cx. 3.

‡ Isaiah liii. 11.

CHAPTER II.

THE PRESENT MEDIATORIAL EXALTATION OF THE LORD JESUS. — THE CONSUMMATION OF THE MEDIATORIAL SCHEME.

THE Redeemer has “entered into His glory.” His work on earth as “the Man of sorrows” is over; and the anguish which once filled His heart in the solitudes of Gethsemane, and amidst the tumult and darkness of Calvary, is past for ever. His resurrection was the commencement of His triumph, and the pledge of yet higher dignity.* Scenes of brightness now encircle Him. Amidst the acclamations of attendant angels, He has “passed into the heavens,” and has “sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high.”†

Our faith has to follow Him to heaven. The glory in which He now appears is hidden from our view: but we can turn to His own emphatic sayings while on earth,—to the declarations of His inspired apostles,—and to the prophetic oracles of the ancient Scriptures, now placed in the clearest light; and, realising the scenes which they unfold, we can ascend, in thought, to those realms of joy where the Saviour reigns and triumphs.

An unearthly *dignity* encircles *His human nature*. Every trace of sadness and suffering has passed away from His benignant countenance; though even His glorified form presents the marks of His sacrificial

* Romans vi. 9, 10. † Hebrews i. 3; iv. 14; Psalm xxiv. 7—10.

death, and reminds the angelic hosts of the scene of Calvary.* But a dazzling brightness is now diffused over His sacred body,—a brightness surpassing even that with which it was invested on the mount of transfiguration. It presents a beautiful and striking contrast to the lowliness in which He once appeared on earth; and it forms the model to which “the body of our humiliation” shall be at last conformed by His almighty power, if only we trust in His atonement, and are devoted to His service.†

The Redeemer is *the Object of adoration to the hosts of heaven.* They worshipped the Son, together with the Father and the Holy Ghost, before He became incarnate to effect the redemption of man. They honoured Him, in obedience to the command of the Father, when He stooped from the throne of His glory to ally Himself to our nature in all the weakness of infancy.‡ They watched with interest His entire career on earth; they ministered to Him in His temptations and sorrows; they gathered round His cross; and they hailed the triumph of His resurrection. And now that He has ascended to heaven, and the lustre of His Divine perfections shines forth without a veil, and He reigns, as the Mediator, at the right hand of the Father, they “bow” with reverence and love to His glorious “name,” ascribing to Him “power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing.”§ They place themselves at His disposal, and esteem it their privilege and honour to execute His will, and to minister to the comfort and safety of the humblest of His people.||

* Revelation v. 6, 11, 12.

† Philippians iii. 21; 1 Corinthians xv. 49, 50.

‡ Hebrews i. 6; Luke ii. 13, 14.

§ Philippians ii. 9, 10; Revelation v. 12. || Hebrews i. 14.

The *authority* with which the Redeemer is now invested is to be viewed as *given* to Him by the Eternal Father. It belongs to Him *in His complex person*, and *in His character as the Mediator*. He Himself declared, a short time before He ascended to the throne of His glory, “All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth.”* The dominion of our Lord is one which was assigned to Him, in the counsels of the Divine mind, when the plan of our recovery was formed. Ages before the song of the angels announced the advent of the Messiah, the prophetic oracle had been delivered, “The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit Thou at My right hand, until I make Thine enemies Thy footstool.”† That oracle is now receiving its accomplishment; and the Eternal Son, who for our sakes became incarnate, and submitted even to the ignominy and suffering of the cross, is now exalted to unutterable glory, in the nature which He assumed for our salvation.‡

The dominion of our Lord *extends to every creature*. Every agency throughout the universe is subjected to His control.§ Even the hosts of darkness are restrained by His sovereign will; and the ungodly among men, who resist His government and seek not the blessings of His grace, cannot free themselves from His rule, or break through the limits within which His unseen power confines their guilty efforts.|| Nature, in all her realms, owns His sway, and obeys the intimations of His will. The entire course of providence is ordered and directed by Him. He guides the circumstances

* Matthew xxviii. 18.

† Psalm cx. 1.

‡ Philippians ii. 5—11; Hebrews xii. 2.

§ 1 Corinthians xv. 27; Ephesians i. 20—22. || Psalm ii. 1—9.

which determine the position of individual men; and He arranges, or permits, the events which fix the destiny of nations. The gentler influences which mould the character of society, and the sudden revolutions which shake or overwhelm the institutions of men, are made to contribute to the establishment of His kingdom; and all things are tending to that grand consummation when He shall be revealed as the universal Lord, when “every knee shall bow” to Him, and “every tongue confess” His sovereignty and power.

But the reign of the Saviour *is directed to moral and spiritual ends*.—His dominion is especially one of *grace* and *blessing* to man, considered as fallen and guilty. “Him hath God exalted with His right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins.”* From the throne of His glory He has sent down the Holy Spirit, to convince the world of sin,—to lead the awakened and contrite sinner to His cross,—and to impart consolation and purity to the soul that believes in Him.† He has sent forth, also, His ambassadors, to proclaim in His stead the message of reconciliation, and to exhibit His atonement as the refuge of the guilty and distressed.‡ The exaltation of the Redeemer is ever to be associated, in our minds, with the rich provisions of the evangelical economy for the illumination and conversion of men. It was a beautiful prediction of the inspired Psalmist, in relation to the Messiah enthroned at the right hand of the Father, “The LORD shall send the rod of Thy strength out of Zion.”§ From the bosom of His church,—

* Acts v. 31.

† John xvi. 7—11; xiv. 16—18.

‡ 2 Corinthians v. 18—20.

§ Psalm cx. 2.

small and feeble as it was,—and from the hill of Zion, where so many of the faithful of old had looked forward to the blessings of redemption, the apostolic band went forth, to announce the glad tidings of salvation through the name of Jesus; and their word was attended with an unseen power, which rendered it triumphant over every opposing influence. The stubborn and selfish heart was melted into penitence; men of all ranks, of all degrees of intellectual culture, were brought to the obedience of faith; and “the kingdom of God” was established in the breasts of thousands of our race. This feature of the mediatorial administration of the Saviour still continues. He sends forth His servants, even now, to declare the facts of His redeeming work, and to offer pardon and eternal life to all who trust in Him. And He is *with them* in their work. The message which they bear to a perishing world, is accompanied, as in the first ages, by His unseen energy; and thus it awakens in many hearts the deepest emotions, and calls forth earnest spiritual effort. The Lord Jesus reigns to subdue our alienated world, by the gentle influence of His own truth, and the secret operation of the promised Spirit. To this grand result the arrangements of His government are directed; and when His Gospel shall be proclaimed throughout the world, and the men of every land shall welcome His gracious sway, then shall the promise be fulfilled, that “in Him shall all the nations of the earth be blessed.”*

But the mediatorial reign of the Lord Jesus has *a special relation to His believing people*, and is directed to their *welfare and security*. When we penitently embrace the overtures of mercy, and fly to Him as the

* Genesis xxii. 18, collated with Galatians iii. 8; Acts iii. 25, 26.

Saviour of the lost, we become more particularly His *subjects*, and are entitled to the privileges and immunities of His kingdom. Thus, when the apostle Paul would represent the change which believers in Christ experience, through the abounding grace of the Father, he says, “Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son.”* The privileges of Christ’s subjects are high and glorious. They enjoy through Him the forgiveness of sins;—they receive the Holy Spirit as the Comforter and the Sanctifier;—they walk in a region of light and spiritual freedom;—and they are constituted heirs of heaven. The active administration of the Saviour is directed to their preservation,—their comfort,—and their maturity in holiness. The agencies which from time to time He raises up in His church are designed to promote the edification of His saints, as well as the conversion of the world.† He watches over the humblest of His people with affectionate interest; and orders every circumstance that can affect their welfare. He shelters them in the hour of danger; Hesustains them in the time of conflict and sorrow. In their greatest weakness,—if they only look to Him,—He displays the perfect character of His own strength, and the sufficiency of His ever-present grace.‡ He leads them onward to eternal life, that they may share that rest from conflict, and toil, and sorrow, upon which He has entered.§

The mediatorial reign of the Lord Jesus has, also, an aspect of *terror* towards those who *obstinately maintain an attitude of hostility to Him*. It was predicted of the

* Colossians i. 13. † Ephesians iv. 11—13; Matthew xxiv. 45.

‡ 2 Corinthians xii. 9.

§ John x. 27, 28; xvii. 24.

Messiah, that He should "break" His enemies "with a rod of iron, and dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel;";* and on the ground of this announcement, the exhortation was addressed even to the most exalted and powerful of the human family, "Be wise now therefore, O ye kings: be instructed, ye judges of the earth. Serve the LORD with fear, and rejoice with trembling. Kiss THE SON, lest He be angry, and ye perish from the way, when His wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in Him."† To the sinner who acknowledges his guilt, bows to the authority of Christ, and flies to Him as the refuge of the perishing, His government is one of peace and blessing; but to the man who treats with neglect the overtures of His mercy, and hardens his heart against the influences of the Holy Spirit, that government will at last prove to be one of fearful judgment. From the throne of His glory, the Saviour now looks down upon the conflict which is going on in our world. He sees, on the one hand, His humble and devoted followers, adorned with "the beauties of holiness" imparted to them from above, and esteeming it their highest privilege and honour to live and labour for Himself;‡ and on the other, He beholds the enemies of His truth and grace. In many human hearts He perceives a decided hostility to His claims, and a settled aversion from that living, spiritual religion, which gathers the affections around Him as the incarnate Son of God. But He "rules in the midst of His enemies."§ He fears them not. Their utmost strength and subtilty cannot shake His throne, or overthrow His kingdom among men. In the very *midst* of His enemies He exerts His power,

* Psalm ii. 9. † Psalm ii. 10—12. ‡ Psalm cx. 3. § Psalm cx. 2.

often frustrating their designs, and often, after permitting them to rage and triumph for a while, interposing to cover them with shame, and overwhelm them with the visitations of His wrath. Still, however, He permits the struggle to continue. Age after age the same diversity of human character presents itself; and the same principles are brought into conflict. But the day is coming, when all the enemies of the Redeemer shall be made His "footstool;" and when even those lips which never uttered the name of Jesus but with ridicule and scorn, shall confess reluctantly its transcendent glory.*

But as we follow the Redeemer, by faith, to the heavenly world, we behold Him sustaining there the character of our great *High Priest*. The prophetic declarations of the ancient Scriptures had exhibited the Messiah to the faith and hope of men, as combining, in His person, the regal and priestly offices. Thus, in the beautiful and impressive psalm to which we have already referred, the august Sovereign who sits at the right hand of the Eternal Father, and before whom at last every hostile power must fall, is represented also as invested with an everlasting priesthood. "The *LORD* hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a Priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek."† It belonged to the priestly office to make atonement for sin, to offer intercession for men, and solemnly to bless them in the name of Jehovah. In all these respects the Redeemer is our Priest,—discharging the functions of that sacred office in a far higher sense than any of those who ministered in the Jewish sanctuary. He has made *atonement* for the sins of men,—not a typical atonement,

* Psalm ex. 1; Philippians ii. 11.

† Psalm ex. 4.

prefiguring some greater and nobler offering hereafter to be presented, but an efficacious and perfect atonement; one, the virtue of which reaches back to former ages, and forward to the very close of this world's history. He has offered up *Himself*; and the dignity of His person as the incarnate Son, and the spotless purity of His character, give to His sacrifice an infinite and permanent value. "For such an High Priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens; who needeth not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people's: for this He did once, when He offered up *Himself*. For the law maketh men high priests which have infirmity; but the word of the oath, which was since the law, maketh THE SON, who is consecrated for evermore."* He has gone "with His own blood," "not into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us."† The sacrifice which was completed on Calvary is still presented on our behalf in the heavenly world; and "the blood of sprinkling" has a voice which pleads effectually for mercy on all who trust in it alone.‡ Our exalted Redeemer "maketh *intercession* for us."§ His very presence as our Advocate and Friend in heaven, and the constant presentation of His sacrifice on our behalf, secure the success of our prayers for spiritual blessings, if only we seek them with a lively faith in Him. It is through Him that our acts of worship come up with acceptance to the Father. The "spiritual

* Hebrews vii. 26—28. See also Hebrews ix. 14.

† Hebrews ix. 24. ‡ Hebrews xii. 24. § Romans viii. 34.

sacrifices" which His people offer, can only be received by the infinite purity of Jehovah, when they involve an acknowledgment of that propitiatory sacrifice which He presents before the throne.* And, as our Priest, He dispenses to His people the richest blessings. He imparts peace to the troubled mind; He gives strength to the weary and fainting soul; He invigorates His saints for the conflicts and duties of the present life; and He sustains them as the last adversary approaches, and when their heart and flesh begin to fail. His deep sympathy with man,—His own experience, while on earth, of the sorrows and temptations of our present state,—and the condescending manner in which He ever identified Himself with His people, encourage us to look to Him for consolation and support under every trial; while the glory of His person and the perfection of His sacrifice, assure us that His power to save and bless us is unlimited and permanent. "Seeing then that we have a great High Priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. For we have not an High Priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need."†

In contemplating the present mediatorial exaltation of the Lord Jesus, it is important for us to reflect further, that He appears in heaven as *the Head of His church.*‡ Several things implied in this relation have been already alluded to, in the rapid view which we

• 1 Peter ii. 5.

† Hebrews iv. 14—16.

‡ Colossians i. 18; Ephesians i. 22.

have taken of His sovereignty and priesthood. It implies, for instance, His *authority* over His church,—that it belongs to Him to rule and govern the entire body, laying down the laws which His people are to obey, and appointing the institutions which they are to observe and maintain. It implies His *special care* for the interests of His church,—that He watches over it with affectionate solicitude, to shelter it in the hour of danger, to avert from it everything which would be ultimately injurious, and to provide for its stability and welfare. It implies, further, that He is *the source of living energy to His believing people*. It is from Him that we receive the life-giving Spirit, whose gracious influence causes us to delight in God, attracts us to each other, and forms the earnest of future blessedness. This relation involves, also, that *exquisite sympathy* of our Lord with His believing people, to which we have alluded as one of His qualifications for the discharge of His priestly office. And it shows us that *He connects the happiness and glory of His people with His own*. It is His gracious purpose, that all who believe in Him, and are devoted to His service, shall be with Him at last, to share His dignity, and participate His joy.* He has gone into heaven as the Forerunner of His people; and He regards it as essential to the *completeness* of His mediatorial triumphs, that all who are truly His should, in their restored and perfected nature, be introduced to His presence, and dwell with Him eternally.†

To this grand consummation the history of our world is tending. It is not for us to know, *when* the revolu-

* John xii. 26; xvii. 24; Matthew xxv. 21, 23.

† Hebrews vi. 20; John xiv. 2, 3; Ephesians i. 23.

tions of earth shall reach their close, and the Redeemer shall come again as the final Judge. But the fact itself is certain. He who once appeared among us in great lowliness, and who for our sakes submitted to the death of the cross, shall descend from heaven, amidst the acclamations of attendant angels, while "the voice of the archangel," and "the trump of God," summon the attention of the universe to the scene to be unfolded.* Then shall the glorious *resurrection* of His saints take place. Their entire nature was redeemed by Him, and consecrated by His Spirit to His service; and now that their bodies have reposed, as His once did, in the silence of the grave, they shall be raised by His power, and conformed to that glory which encircles His own humanity.† The wicked also will be raised;‡ and they that are living upon the earth will be "caught up to meet the Lord in the air." Thus will death, the last enemy, yield to the power of Jesus. "For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory."§

The *judgment of the last day* is a theme unspeakably solemn and affecting. The declarations of our Lord place before us, in a vivid and impressive manner, both the *majesty* in which He will be revealed, and the *principles* on which His decisions will be formed. With unerring accuracy He will then separate mankind into

* 1 Thessalonians iv. 16.

† 1 Thessalonians iv. 13—15; Philippians iii. 20, 21.

‡ John v. 28, 29; Acts xxiv. 15.

§ 1 Corinthians xv. 53, 54. See also verses 25, 26.

two great classes, not on the ground of any of those adventitious distinctions which prevailed on earth, but solely on that of religious character.* Having known the heart, and traced the life, of every human being, He will determine, with perfect rectitude, the rewards and punishments of eternity.† He will visit with His severest displeasure those who refused to come to Him,—who would not, while on earth, bow to His authority, or trust in His atonement.‡ He will reject, and treat as utterly unworthy of His love, those who shrunk back from confessing Him before men,—who, to escape the ridicule of the ungodly, and to avoid a sacrifice of temporal comfort, did violence to their conscience, and proved unfaithful to Him.§ He will condemn, also, those who refused to acknowledge His people when in want, or suffering, or persecution, and who did not seek to alleviate their sorrows, and to support them under their trials.|| He will frown upon those who professed to be His followers, but who cherished some secret iniquity, or whose lives were impure and corrupt. Amidst the awful glories of that day, He will “bring to light” their “hidden works of darkness;”¶ and though they may be ready to plead, that they were included in His church on earth, and even taught in His name, He will disown them, and command them to depart.** All these forms of character will, at the last day, be exhibited in their essential baseness; and they who sustained them will be involved in the common doom.

* Matthew xxv. 31, 32.

† Acts xvii. 31.

‡ Luke xix. 27; John xii. 48; iii. 36.

§ Mark viii. 34—38; Matthew xvi. 24—27.

|| Matthew xxv. 41—45.

¶ 1 Corinthians iv. 5.

** Matthew vii. 22, 23.

of everlasting banishment from God. However different, in some respects, their feelings and conduct, they will all appear to have rejected the authority of Christ,—to have trifled with His cross,—and to have been destitute of an active love to Him. With Him they cannot dwell eternally. They have no principles in common with His devoted people; and, in obedience to His awful mandate, they must depart to the regions of the lost, to share the woes and anguish of the fallen angels that have long been estranged from all that is pure and good, and whose only bond of union is enmity to God.*

But the Redeemer will look with complacency, from the throne of His glory, upon His believing and holy people. With humble, yet joyous confidence, they will appear before Him;† and their restored nature will reflect His own dignity and loveliness.‡ He “shall come to be glorified in His saints, and to be admired in all them that believe.”§ The judgment of that day will recognise and make prominent the arrangements of the mediatorial scheme. All its decisions will proceed upon that mixed economy of grace and law which was established through the Sacrifice of the cross. Faith in that Sacrifice will then be approved and honoured; not, indeed, a cold assent to its truth or its importance, but a personal reliance upon it as the only refuge of the guilty.|| Fidelity to Christ, and obedience to His will, will also be graciously rewarded. If we have confessed Him amidst the sneers of the ungodly, and at the hazard of our worldly interests, He will own us in the presence

* Matthew xxv. 41, 46.

† 1 John ii. 28; iv. 17; 2 Timothy iv. 8.

‡ 1 John iii. 2. § 2 Thessalonians i. 10.

|| Philippians iii. 9—11; John iii. 14—18.

of the heavenly hosts, and of the whole human family.* If, instead of trifling with His laws, and disregarding His example, we have delighted in holiness, and have walked in His steps;—if we have used our powers and advantages for His glory, and our lives have exhibited the results of that living energy which His Spirit diffuses through the believing mind;—He will acknowledge us as His “saints,” and welcome us to participate in His joy.† He will distinguish with peculiar marks of His complacency an active and devoted love to Himself,—a love which evinced its power in sympathy with His suffering followers, in the sharing of their reproaches, and the relief of their wants.‡ The acknowledgment of His claims,—the trust of the heart in Him as the crucified Redeemer,—the unreserved devotion of the affections and energies to His service,—and the practical development of holiness,—are the grand features of character which He will approve, when He sits upon the throne of judgment, and fixes the eternal destinies of men.

But when the awful solemnities of that day shall have closed, His *entire church* will enter upon a state of intimate union with Him; and that union will continue throughout eternity.§ The resurrection of the body has consummated *His* triumph, and given to *them* their entire nature, restored and glorified. The winding up of this world’s history has gathered all His saints around Him, in the abodes of light and joy. None are left toiling amidst the conflicts and sorrows of earth,—

* Matthew x. 32; John xii. 25.

† Matthew vii. 21, 24, 25; John xii. 26; Matthew xxv. 14—23.

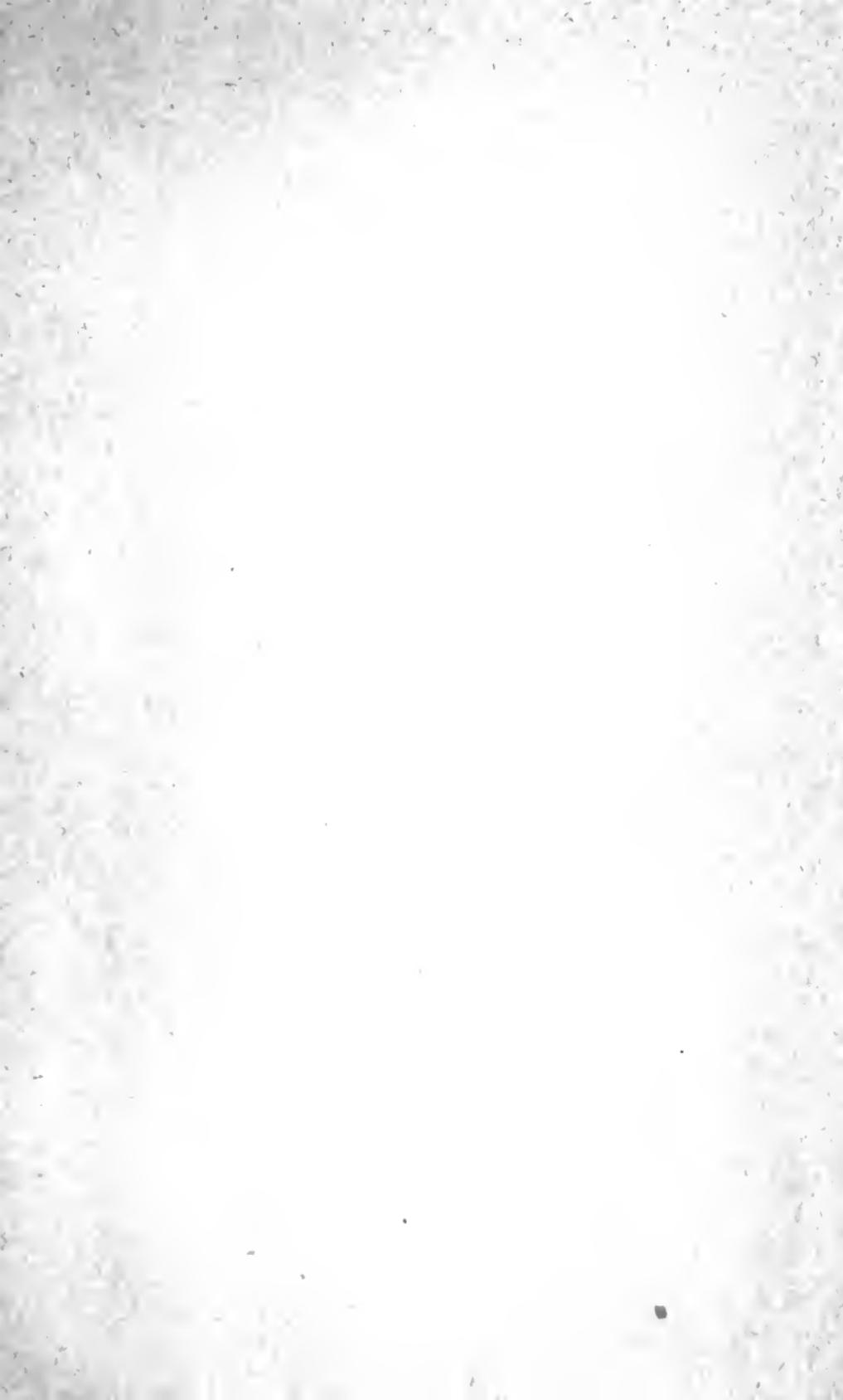
‡ Matthew xxv. 34—40.

§ 1 Thessalonians iv. 17; Matthew xxv. 46.

assailed by the powers of darkness, and encompassed with the adverse influences of the world. The universal church of spiritual and holy men is admitted to His presence, to share His victory, and enjoy His sacred rest. He looks upon them with complacency; reveals to them the glory of His character, and the wonders of His love; unfolds to them, yet more and more clearly, the economy of redemption; and opens to them sources of satisfaction and delight which are ever fresh and unfailing.* To enjoy the Saviour's friendship,—to hold communion with Him,—and to be conformed to His perfect loveliness,—will constitute the bliss of the redeemed throughout eternity.† When the exercise of His priestly functions has ceased, and the crowning act of His mediatorial administration has been performed, the Redeemer will still appear as the Head of His church, “the First-born among many brethren;” and all the purity and glory of His saints will be but the reflection of His own, and will be ascribed by them to their relation to Him, the incarnate Son of God.‡

* John xvii. 24; Revelation vii. 17.

† Philippians i. 23; 1 John iii. 1, 2. ‡ Romans viii. 29, 17.





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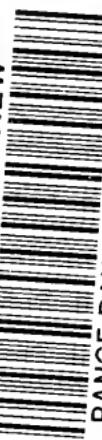
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